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October
2008

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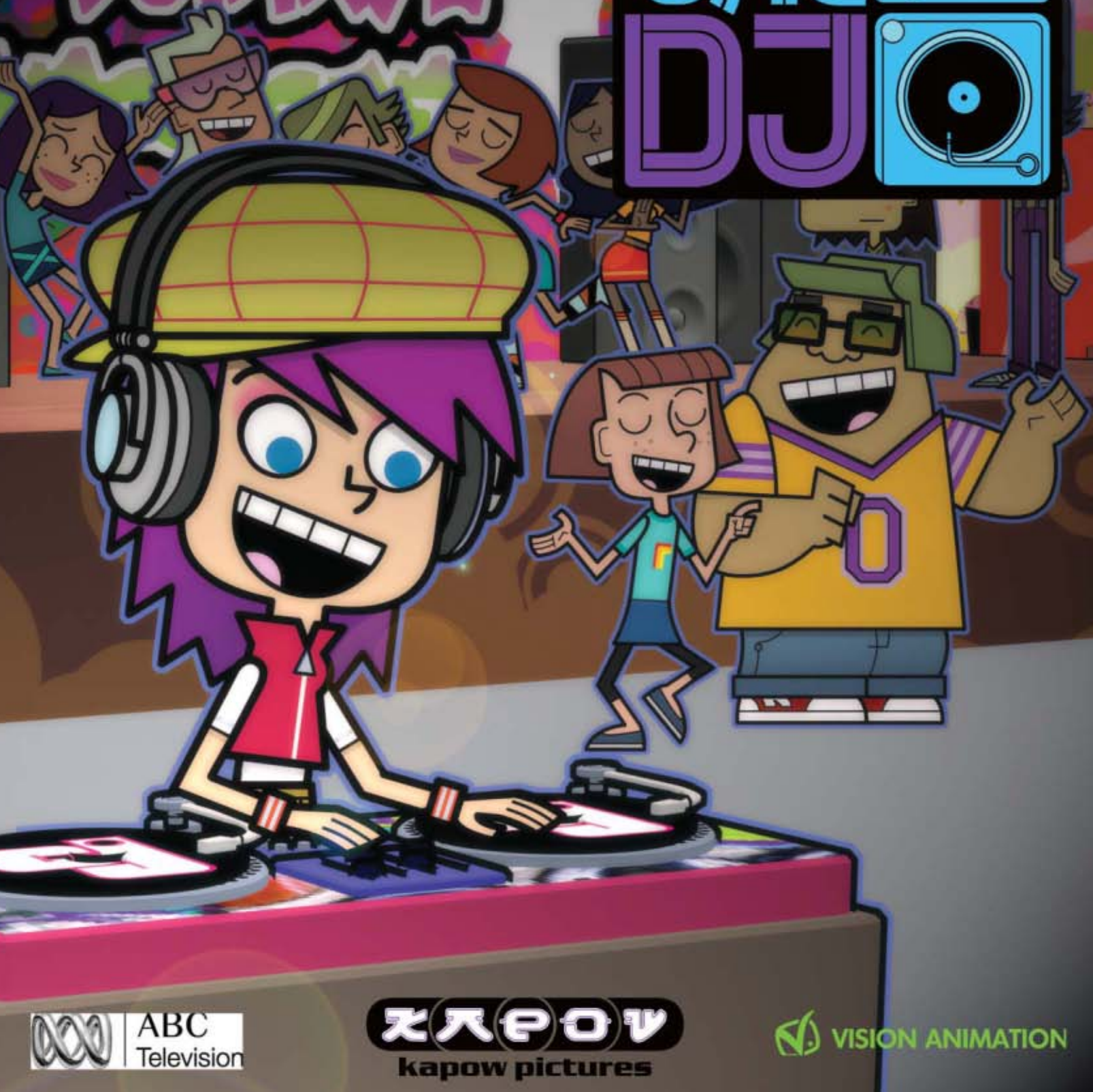
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Ottawa Cover: Nelvana's new animated
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screen near you!

Cartoon Forum Cover: Millimages comes to
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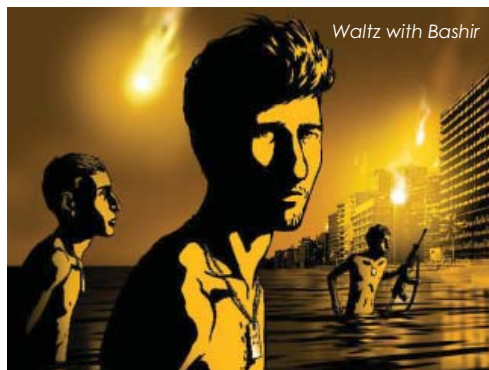
Animae Caribe Cover: Toon Boom
technologies revolutionize the
animation world.



Although industry observers have pointed out that it's been a tough year for independents to survive in these financially challenging times, you wouldn't know it by the amazing quality of the animated projects we've been lucky to see in 2008. Our informative cover story by Michael Mallory focuses on one of these features—Exodus Film Group's *Igor*—which certainly looks and feels different from some of the other toons we've seen in theaters in recent months.

Then, there's *Waltz with Bashir*, the acclaimed animated documentary by Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman. After causing a buying frenzy at the Cannes Film Festival, the movie was picked up by Sony Pictures Classic and will screen at the Ottawa Animation Festival this month and open in U.S. theaters December 26. The innovative film uses animation to recreate Folman's experiences as an Israeli draftee during the first Lebanon War.

In interviews, Folman has discussed how he wrote a 90-page script for the movie, then he shot the movie on video, screened it and did storyboards. Then, he and his team started from scratch and drew the film—not by rotoscoping it, but by using Flash, 3-D software and about 20 percent classic animation. Although it's quite different from Marjane Satrapi's Oscar-nominated *Persepolis*, it shares with that film the exhilarating ability to expand the definitions of what an animated movie should be and can be. On behalf of all of us animation fans in the U.S., let's hear it for SPC's co-presidents Michael Barker and Tom Bernard who have had the vision to bring fantastic animated masterpieces such as *Waltz with Bashir*, *Persepolis* and *The Triplets of Belleville* to American theaters. (Not to mention their award-winning live-action slate which has included, *Run Lola Run*;



Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and *Volver*). Look for an in-depth look at the making of *Waltz with Bashir* in the January issue of our magazine.

You will find plenty of signs of the health of the U.S. indie scene at this year's Ottawa Festival. In addition to Folman's pic, Richard Williams, Bill Plympton, Nina Paley, Michael Sporn, Don Hertzfeldt, Run Wrake and PES are all part of the stellar lineup this year. Our hats off to the hard-working fest director Chris Robinson for putting on such a great show year after year.

Speaking of indie sensibilities, the folks at [adult swim] have managed to really top themselves with the very risqué new series called *Superjail!* Created by Christy Karacas, Stephen Warbick and Ben Gruber and animated by the talented team at Augenblick Studios, this latest addition to Cartoon Network's late-night madhouse is the kind of toon that is bound to put conservative viewers into violent seizures. But, seriously, who cares, because they shouldn't be watching [adult swim] in the first place anyway! Make sure you check out Mercedes Milligan's fun interview with the creators of the show in this issue and on our website (www.animag.tv). Who knew filtering HBO's rough-and-scary Oz series through Willy Wonka's glasses would create such a heady ride?

Ramin

Ramin Zahed
Editor-in-Chief
rzahed@animationmagazine.net

Quote of the Month

"Disney turned me down three times for jobs before Pixar hired me. Years later, Pixar got a deal with Disney. Six of us went down there to pitch an idea. I was the low man on our team, but Disney security had us down as 'Stanton plus five.' That's how I wanted to return to Disney."



—Andrew Stanton, director of *WALL•E*, in a *New York Times Magazine* interview

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The Animation Planner

October

1 L.A.-based **Freewaves' HollyWould ...** festival kicks off a high-energy collection of alternative animated and live-action projects (www.freewaves.org).



1-31 Look for a rich collection of inventive projects from all over the world at the fifth annual **Nicktoons Network Animation Festival** (www.nicktoonsnetwork.com/nnaf).



3 Raja Gosnell's howler, **Beverly Hills Chihuahua** (50% warrior, 50% lover), will be unleashed in theaters today. Drew Barrymore, Cheech Marin, George Lopez and Jamie Lee Curtis are on board the comedic canine romp.



4-5 Forget 3D! Check out the **5D: The Future of Immersive Design** conference held in Long Beach, Calif. this weekend. Oh, and the 5D refers to film, TV, animation, interactive and environment! (www.5Dconference.com).



7 The arrival of **The Simpsons: The Complete 11th Season** and **Sleeping Beauty: Two-Disc Platinum Edition** DVDs means the fall DVD season is in full gear. Also out today: **Speed Racer: The Next Generation—The Fast Track** and **Robot Chicken: Season Three**. Blu-ray fans will be lining up for **Beetlejuice** and **The Ray Harryhausen Box Set!**

10 **Monster House** director Gil Kenan is back for his second movie, a live-action adaptation of the fantasy novel **City of Ember**, starring Bill Murray. Also released in theaters today is the thriller **Quarantine**.



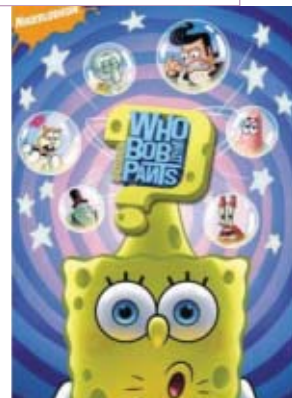
12-15 Albuquerque, New Mexico, hosts the **motion08** festival, where animators, gaming pros, vfx artists and sound designers share the secrets of their trades (www.motionconference.com).



13-17 TV buyers and producers of animated content will be gathering in Cannes this week for the **MIPCOM** confab (www.mipcom.com).



14 The nights are getting longer, which means you'll have more time for home entertainment this month. Check out this Tuesday's new DVD releases: **SpongeBob SquarePants: WhoBob WhatPants**; **Silverhawks: Season 1, Vol. 1**; **Bleach Movie 1: Memories of Nobody**; **The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything: A VeggieTales Movie** and **Liberty's Kids: Complete Series**.



15-19 Check out the always fantastic **Animatu Digital Animation Festival** in Beja, Portugal this week (www.festivalanimatu.com). Explore the region's booming animation and vfx market at this year's **Broadcast India 2008** confab, held in Mumbai (www.saicom.com/broadcastindia/2008).



17 Mark Wahlberg stars as a DEA agent who partners up with an assassin in the action thriller **Max Payne**, directed by John Moore and based on the popular videogame. Also opening today is the much-anticipated Oliver Stone biopic, **W.**, starring Josh Brolin as that lame duck from Texas.



21 A whole lot of choices await you on DVD today. High on our list is the sixth volume in the **Looney Tunes: Golden Collection** series. Also competing for your hard-earned dollars are **Family Guy, Volume 6**; **Ben 10 Alien Force: Season One, Vol. 1** and **Go Diego Go! It's a Bug's World**. See sharper images at this year's **HD Film Festival** in Paris (www.hdfilm-festival.com).



23-26 Get a few scares and animated thrills at the **Int'l Horror & Sci-Fi Film Festival** in Tempe, Ariz. (www.horrorscifi.com).



23-Nov. 2 You can always catch some of the best international animated movies and shorts of the year at the **Chicago Int'l Children's Film Festival** (www.cicff2008.org).



27-Nov. 2 Docs and toons are happy bedfellows at the **Documentary and Animated Film** celebration in Leipzig, Germany, this week (www.dok-leipzig.de).



28 Peter Pan's feisty gal pal gets her own adventure in Disney's **Tinker Bell**, out on DVD and Blu-ray today. Another big arrival today is **The Flintstones: The Complete Series**—now that's going

to be on a lot of people's holiday wish lists! And just in time for Halloween, you can pick up **Mystery Science Theater 3000: 20th Anniversary** DVD.



31-Nov. 2 The downtown Miami Hilton opens its door to the wild, colorful ride that is the **Anime Supercon** (www.animesupercon.com).



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

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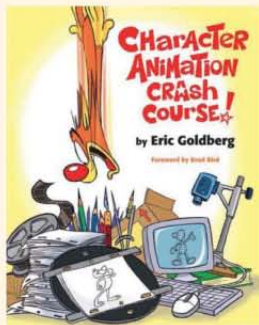


Books We Love

Character Animation Crash Course!

By Eric Goldberg [Silman-James Press, \$35 with CD]

Over the past 20 years, we've seen the wonderful creations of talented director, designer and animator Eric Goldberg in movies such as *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, *Fantasia 2000* and *Hercules*. (You really get an idea of how brilliant he is in the "Friend Like Me" sequence in *Aladdin*!) This month, all aspiring animators and toon fans have another reason to thank this amazing man, as his "Crash Course" on the art form's various techniques and theories is finally out in bookstores. Packed with lots of helpful tips and eye-catching illustrations, the book is the perfect antidote to all the dry, technical how-to books which sprout up regularly in this market. "Whatever technologies continue to develop in the medium, the investment of personal feelings and emotions will always be animation's future," writes Goldberg, who is currently working on Disney's 2009 feature, *The Princess and the Frog*. "This is the book that I wish I had when I was learning my craft." *Crash Course* also comes with a killer CD that takes us along the author's principles in real time or frame-by-frame. Who needs a magic lamp when you've got this book to guide you along the way?



Flight Volume Five

By various artists, edited by Kazu Kibuishi [Villard Books \$25]

The creative team who has put together the amazing new comic anthology *Flight Vol. Five* knows how to grab you right from the very first page. A beautifully drawn work by Michel Gagné (*The Iron Giant*, *Osmosis Jones*) titled *The Broken Path* launches our journey. From its very first panel, this wordless fantasy about an alien fox-like creature with a single horn demands our attention and leaves us wanting more, some 30 pages later. Not all the contributors to this volume work in animation, but you may recognize names such as Chris Appelhaus (*Monster House*), Reagan Lodge (*Nickelodeon Magazine*), Richard Pose (*Metacalypse*), Paul Rivoche (*Justice League: The New Frontier*) and Kean Soo (*Jellaby*). The 23 contributors to this ethereal volume all work in different styles and tell a wide range of off-beat stories, but they have one thing in common: They're all terribly talented and sure know how to knock your socks off with a memorable piece of visual whimsy.



—by Ramin Zahed



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Ponyo Swims to Victory

Master Hayao has done it again! *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea*, the latest animated feature from filmmaker **Hayao Miyazaki**, has crossed the 10 billion Yen (\$93.2 million) mark at the Japanese box office. The movie hit the magic number 31 days after its release, beating Miyazaki's last movie, *Howl's Moving Castle*, which took 33 days to get there. The anime giant's 2001 movie *Spirited Away*,



which earned 10 billion Yen 25 days out of the gate and went on to gross nearly \$280 million worldwide, still holds the top record.

Ponyo centers on a five-year-old boy's friendship with a "girl-fish" who wants to be human and ventures out of her underwater world. The plot echoes elements from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* fairy tale, as well as traditional Japanese folklore, and the boy's character is based on Miyazaki's own son, Goro. Miyazaki was reportedly directly involved in many aspects of the animation, preferring to draw the sea and waves himself. The movie debuted in Japan on July 19 and reportedly earned around \$17 million upon opening. Interestingly enough, Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy (*Persepolis*) are listed as the film's U.S. producers. Disney hasn't announced a specific date for the release of the latest Miyazaki masterpiece Stateside, but given the excellent nature of the relationship between Miyazaki and Disney's chief creative officer John Lasseter, chances are we won't have to wait too long to take in the fish tale.

Mid-Year Numbers!

We're only four months away before the deluge of all the year-end box-office tallies and Oscar countdowns drive us insane. So we figured we should give you a clear picture of how the big-screen animated scene has shaped up as we embark on the final days of summer:



Movie (Studio)	Domestic B.O. in Millions	Critical Rating
1. WALL•E (Disney/Pixar)	\$216.1	97%
2. Kung Fu Panda (DreamWorks)	\$212.6	88%
3. Horton Hears A Who! (Fox)	\$154.3	78%
4. Space Chimps (Fox)	\$27.9	33%
5. Star Wars: The Clone Wars (Warner)	\$24.9	18%
6. Pirates Who Don't Do Anything (Univ.)	\$12.7	41%
7. Fly Me to the Moon (Summit)	\$4.1	16%
8. Chicago 10 (Roadside)	\$.176	77%

Source: [boxofficemojo.com](#) (8/23/08); critical ratings: [rottentomatoes.com](#)



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Brooklyn Hosts Another Great Party!

New York City continues its love affair with the annual Animation Block Party. **by Jake Friedman**

This past summer, New York's Animation Block Party festival managed to rock the Eastern Seaboard and celebrate the artistic achievements of the little guy at the same time. What might a perfect animation festival be like? Well, for starters, it would mix a little bit of the old with a lot of the new. Unknowns would play alongside the heavy-hitters for an equal share of the audience. Throw in live music, free drinks and the energy of New York City, and you get a real treat for animation fans.

This year's edition of the Animation Block Party (July 25-27) encompassed three days of screenings and after-parties. Folks were invited to bring their own refreshments for nighttime screenings on the lawn, and venues like Habana Outpost projected animation on the wall while people ordered their barbeque.

The festival certainly showed signs of growth. "It's amazing how it's grown in five years," says festival head Casey Safron. "We had more programs than ever, we had more people than ever—a thousand on opening night alone. And as we keep upping the ante, the after parties get bigger, the bands get bigger, and with a hundred films screened this year, we can show more movies from the most diverse talent you can find."

Safron, originator and curator of the festival, moonlights as the head of the School of Visual Arts' animation department, so he sees emerging talent on a regular basis and invests that energy into the fest. "The big thing is emphasizing the undiscovered talent and the underdog and not always going to the clichéd favorite animators," says Safron. "Obviously we do show a lot of the bigwigs like Aardman or Bill Plympton, but we really focus on getting the

new voices from the art schools, to get the exposure to people."

A big factor for keeping the festival underdog-friendly is the low submission fee for students and professionals alike. "I wouldn't ever want someone to spend more than \$50 to send us a two-minute

for *I Live in the Woods*.

The festival has also added a subsidiary production company, headed by Safron. "A lot of opportunities have arisen out of ABP in the past couple years," he says. "There was a film called *Binge and Purge* by Ben Meinhardt at the Vancouver Film School that won the Audience Award in 2005. Around that time, networks started coming to us asking if there were any filmmakers with ideas to pitch them. So we brainstormed back and forth with Ben, and he came up with a concept for a series called



Casey Safron

Perfectland. It premiered on MTV this past Earth Day and is now being screened at ABP. It was produced by ABP in conjunction with the filmmaker. We really worked together to create something great."

Safron adds, "In 2005, Bob Fox showed a short with us called *Breakfast*, so we teamed up with Bob and pitched his film, which was picked up by the Sundance Channel. So we just completed another Animation Block production."

With all its success, Safron plans to keep the Block Party an artist-driven event. "I don't ever see Animation Block Party becoming a giant commercial entity with huge corporate sponsors," he says. "I want to keep it on a grassroots and indie level. If corporate sponsorship would help make it a better festival and get us more funding to bring the filmmakers more opportunities, then that would certainly be considered. But it's grassroots, it's true to Brooklyn and true to that first voice we had five years ago ... right now this is the biggest animation festival on the East Coast of the U.S.A., and I think that's pretty cool." ■

Jake Friedman is a New York-based animator and journalist.

To learn more about the annual event, visit www.animationblock.com.



Luis Cook's *The Pearce Sisters* (above) and Max Winston's *I Live in the Woods* (below) won top awards at the Brooklyn Block Party this summer.

movie. That just seems totally out of control," says Safron. The judges of the festival—Safron is one himself—offer prizes for such categories as the Minute and Under Award (won by Phil Dubrovsky and Dale Hayward for *Flower Sound Cartoon*) and Best Documentary Short (won by Laura Piraino for *ECT: The Story of Two Women*). Best in Show went to Luis Cook for *The Pearce Sisters* and the coveted Audience Award was taken home by Max Winston

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An Indie Monster Comes to Life!

Exodus Film Group plays its hunch with an early Halloween treat named **Igor**. by Michael Mallory

One does not have to dig six feet down to find the metaphor level for *Igor*, a spooky, slightly edgy comedic take on the Frankenstein tradition that is the first animated feature from the Venice, Calif.-based indie, Exodus Film Group. Just as Dr. F. strived to create something that would challenge and change the scientific orthodoxy of the day, Exodus has set out to shake up the conventional wisdom of the way animation is produced.

"Part of the reason the company is called 'Exodus' is that it was a departure from the mindset that you have to spend an enormous amount of money to produce a quality animated feature," says John D. Eraklis, the company's founder and CEO and producer of *Igor*. He and Exodus president Max Howard—a veteran of the major-studio animation trenches who has

worked on features such as *The Lion King*, *Aladdin* and *The Iron Giant*—have used a live-action model in setting up the production, creating a film fund for the financing and partnering with established animation studios for the production, instead of building a shop of its own.

It is the availability of the tools that allows this production model to exist, according to producer Howard. "It used to be that the cost of the hardware and proprietary software was a barrier to anybody entering the animation business," he says. "Now you don't have to develop all this incredible software to do it. We can buy the technology relatively easily and relatively inexpensively, so that it really comes down to the quality of the artist."

Howard sees the choice of Paris-based Sparx Animation (*Rolie Polie Olie*) as the production house for *Igor*

as a fortuitous one, both in what the studio already had and in the team they were able to assemble. "They presented the idea that they would hire a lot of ex-Disney artists at the Paris studio, all guys I knew and worked with for years at Disney," he says. "We have an incredible core of talent on this film."

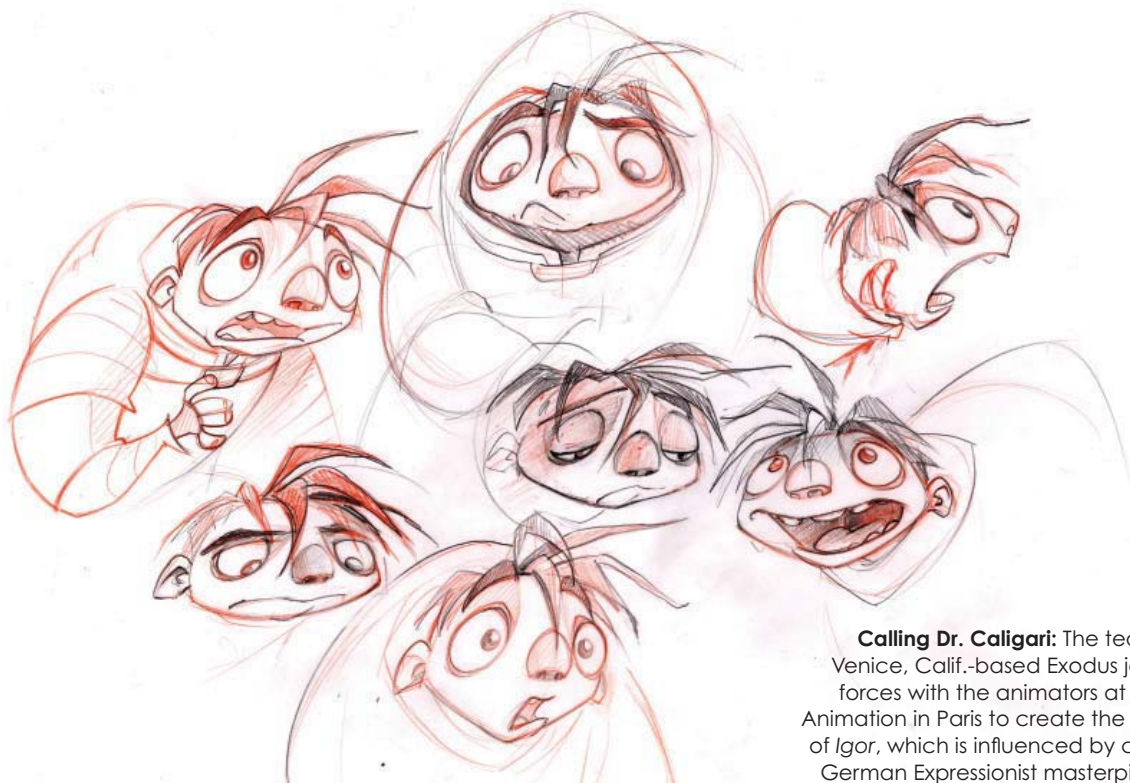
For director Tony Leondis, himself a Disney Feature and DreamWorks veteran whose credits include *The Prince of Egypt* and *Lilo & Stitch 2*, working in France meant artistic freedom. "In Paris, you're allowed to make eccentric



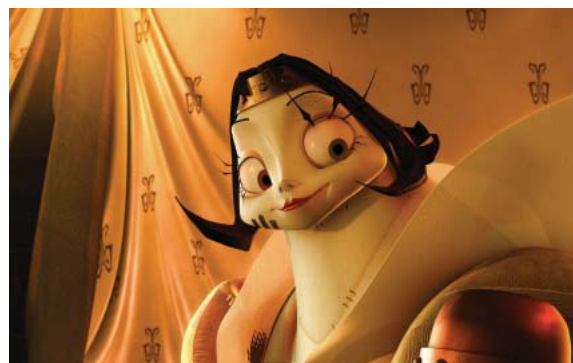
John Eraklis



Max Howard



Calling Dr. Caligari: The team at Venice, Calif.-based Exodus joined forces with the animators at Sparx Animation in Paris to create the world of *Igor*, which is influenced by classic German Expressionist masterpieces.



Tony Leondis



Olivier Besson

shapes and push design," he says, adding that such freedom of eccentricity was crucial for the indie film's ability to make a statement. "For a small little movie like this to make a big impact on the scene, we had to have a really strong visual take, and we didn't have a studio saying, '[the characters] don't look friendly enough!'" The fact

that Leondis is the film's sole director—a rarity in American feature animation—also meant that the artistic freedom was augmented by a singular vision, rooted in Leondis's love of Ger-

"For a small little movie like this to make a big impact on the scene, we had to have a really strong visual take, and we didn't have a studio saying, '[the characters] don't look friendly enough!'"

—*Igor* director Tony Leondis

man Expressionism.

The unique visual styling of the film was an expansion of the original character designs created by Valérie Hadida, according to art director Olivier Besson. "I asked people to follow the design rules of the characters," he says. Besson (yet another ex-Mouser, whose credits include *Hercules*, *Tarzan* and *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*) was also inspired by the odd combination of Expressionistic black-and-white films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Rembrandt's sense of lighting and the color styling of Disney legend Mary Blair!

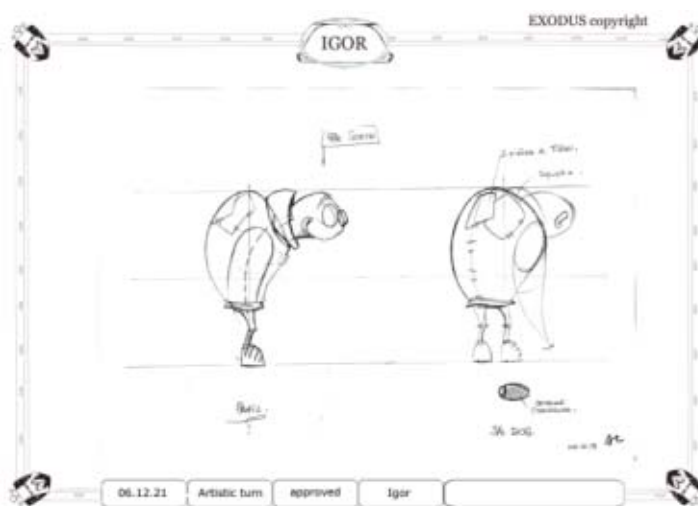
Along with the Expressionistic light effects and desaturated color used to create the film's visual mood, Besson employed digital fog as a kind of spotlighting or muting effect. "I have used mist to reveal or to knock down some parts of the background," he says. "I would put a curtain of mist or fog between the character and the background. The example I gave to the artists was a concert, like when the Rolling Stones are on stage and everything is very dark, but there is smoke or mist and special lights around them."

Because of the limited budget



(which no one will cite, but it's low enough for Eraklis to state: "We don't need to generate hundred-plus million dollar returns for all of the investors in the company to be happy.") and production schedule, which was about a year and a half, the story reel phase was bypassed. The original script by Chris McKenna (*American Dad!*) was storyboarded by David Berthier and Yves Montagne, using Leondis's thumbnail sketches. From there it shot straight to animatic and then on to animation, for which a slightly tweaked off-the-shelf Maya package was utilized. Leondis was held to a retake tolerance of 25 percent at every stage of animation.

Though rated PG and squarely targeted to the family market, *Igor* contains what Leondis calls "a subversive element." The most obvious example of this is the character Scamper (voiced by Steve Buscemi), an immortal but nihilistic and suicidal road-kill rabbit—which even the kiddies should realize is not your standard cutesie-wootsie toon. And there are layers to the story itself, Leondis says. "It's about a world where if you're born with a hunch on



your back, you have to become an Igor," he explains. "You go to Igor School and get your 'Yes Masters' degree. Each evil scientist has an Igor and they're treated like second class citizens."

While the film's central Igor (voiced by John Cusack) attempts to follow his society's expectations, he ends up challenging and changing the conventions of the world in which he lives. Ostensibly an underdog-makes-good story, Leondis says that on a deeper level "our movie is an allegory about today's world, not following your leaders blindly and standing up for what's right."

Employing the live-action model in animation seems to have paid off, as

Exodus and Sparx have begun production on their second feature, *Bunyan and Babe*, which is co-directed by Tony Bancroft (*Mulan*) and vfx master Jim Rygiel (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy). Featuring the voices of Kelsey Grammer, John Goodman and Eddie Griffin, the 2009 offering will center on two children who discover the whereabouts of Paul Bunyan and his famous blue ox while staying at their grandfather's farm in Minnesota.

This month, however, industry watchers will be looking at how *Igor* fares in theaters, as it follows a summer season packed with major studio toon releases. But even beyond demonstrating a new production model, the filmmakers are looking to change the way animation is perceived in the domestic marketplace.

"You don't compare *Juno* to *The Transformers*, yet when *Space Chimps* comes out it's automatically compared to *WALL•E*," says Eraklis. "I think animation should be viewed as a medium, not as a genre." ■

Michael Mallory is a Los Angeles-based author and animation journalist. Visit him at www.michaelmallory.com.

MGM releases *Igor* in U.S. theaters on September 19.

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The Samurai Critic:

Reviews of the Latest Anime Releases on DVD and Blu-ray

by Charles Solomon



Bleach Uncut Season 2 Box Set: The Entry [VIZ: \$69.98, 5 discs]

Psychic power leads Ichigo Kurosaki, a hot-tempered, orange-haired teenager, to a strange girl in a black costume wielding a sword. Rukia is a Soul Reaper: She destroys soul-eating monsters, called Hollows. When a Hollow wounds her, Rukia transfers her sword and much of her power to Ichigo. His exceptional spiritual strength makes him a redoubtable substitute Soul Reaper. Giving that power to a human is a capital offense: Rukia is arrested and taken back to the Soul Society for execution.

Based on the popular manga by Tite

Kubo, *Bleach* is animated by Studio Pierrot and first appeared on TV Tokyo four years ago. As the second season begins, Ichigo and his friends Chad, Orihime and Ishida follow Master Yoruichi the talking cat through an inter-dimensional portal linking Earth to the

Soul Society to rescue Rukia. The Seireitei, the stronghold of the Soul Society, resembles a military camp where the members of various squadrons nurture rivalries and grudges. The teen-aged rescuers fight their way past the weird-looking but formidable captains and lieutenants of the Soul Society. Ichigo's powers increase with each battle, especially when he learns how to make an ally of Zangatsu, the spirit of his sword.

Director Noriyo Abe plays the fights for all they're worth, using slow-motion, overlapping movements, reversed colors and black-and-white segments to intensify the action. Between sword fights, the audience learns about Ichigo and his friends through a series of flashbacks. The story of how the taciturn, muscular Chad

and the prickly Ichigo became friends is both interesting and touching. The excitement is leavened with a healthy dose of slapstick: For example, one overhead shot of Ichigo fleeing a squad of Soul Reapers looks like a Pac-Man game!

Gurren Lagann 01 [Bandai: \$29.98, 2 discs]

Overflowing with color, action and energy, *Gurren Lagann* hits the small screen like a polychrome pie. This freewheeling comedy-adventure is set in the remote future, when mankind has retreated below the Earth's surface to escape the Beast Men who pilot Gunmen, weird mecha that resemble faces. Repressed 14-year-old Simon spends his days as a driller, slowly expanding the cavern that houses his village. His only friend, gang leader Kamina, makes *Bleach*'s Ichigo look sedate. When Simon finds a glowing drill bit and a large humanoid robot, Kamina persuades him to launch the mecha and the two outcasts head for the surface. Like Gai Daigoji in *Martian Successor Nadesico*, Kamina pontificates about what a man's gotta do in bogus lectures that spoof the outpourings of bushido philosophy in *Gundam Wing* and other series. As they traverse a vast desert, Kamina and Simon pound enemy robots into scrap metal and pick up other misfits, including Yoko, a busty redhead who can outshoot Annie Oakley, and fey technical expert Leeron.

Director Hiroyuki Imaishi pulls out all the stops, using rapid cutting, a bold palette and off-beat designs to pump up the action and comedy. Although *Gurren Lagann* has been dubbed into English twice, Bandai



is releasing it in Japanese with subtitles. And for those with deeper pockets, a Special Edition set has been released, which comes with a CD of the show's opening theme song (\$39.98).

The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya: Complete Collection [Bandai: \$59.98, 4 discs]

The title of the series notwithstanding, Haruhi Suzumiya is about as melancholy as a KISS concert. This demanding, high-maintenance high school girl wants to find "aliens, time travelers and ESPers." "What kind of fun does a normal high school student have?" she demands. To aid her quest, Haruhi founds a new club, The SOS Brigade, without realizing the members she's shanghaied are just what she's been looking for: Yuki is an alien android; Mikuru, a time traveler; and Itsuki, an esper. Kyon, the long-suffering narrator, seems normal. But Haruhi's whims may determine the fate of the universe. When she gets upset, dark chasms open between dimensions, where *shinji* (ghostly giants) prowl: Itsuki and other espers are charged with destroying them. This dark storyline recedes almost as soon as it's introduced in favor of spoofs of other anime series and fan culture. When Haruhi designs a new logo for the SOS Brigade Web page, the data propels the president of the school computer club to an alternate world where he's attacked by an "info entity" that resembles a giant cricket. *Melancholy* ends rather abruptly with Haruhi and Kyon walking home together in the rain. Given the popularity of the series and the novels by Nagaru Tanigawa it's based on, some sort of a sequel may be in the works. ■



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Outlaws and Old Pals on DVD

The only thing scary about these pre-Halloween releases is trying to pick just one.
by Mercedes Milligan

Popeye the Sailor: 1941-1943, Vol. 3 [Warner, \$34.98]

"I yam what I yam," quoth the sailor man—and viewers who have been lulled into a false sense of nicety by modern toon fare will have to remind themselves of that sentiment from another era when they spin this new Popeye set. In addition to the eye-wateringly hilarious Max Fleischer-produced eps. left over after Vols. 1 and 2, this release introduces DVD audiences to the sometimes incendiary wartime cartoons.

A few of these shorts included (uncensored) on the two-disc set—produced by Famous Studios and directed by Fleischer, Dan Gordon and studio heads Isidore Sparber and Seymour Kneitel—carry the un-PC badge of "Banned from Television" for their portrayal of wartime racial stereotypes and violence. These DVDs hold a priceless piece of both animation and American history, but if your little ones have been weaned on *Dora the*

Explorer you might want to reserve them for Mommy-Daddy Date Night.
[Release date: Sept. 30]

Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker / Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman [Warner, \$14.98]

Major bang (or is that Batarang?) for your buck: This single disc double feature crams in two wicked DTV specials from two of WB Animation's best-loved interpretations of the Caped Crusader. *Return of the Joker*, directed by Curt Geda (*Ultimate Avengers*) with the full *Batman Beyond* production team at the helm, sees newly minted Batman Terry and his mentor, Bruce Wayne, confronting an old enemy with a new twist. The Joker, thought to be long dead, is back with a new gang of

Jokerz and a twisted "son" (tragic backstory included). His return opens old wounds for Bruce and sends Terry tearing around Gotham trying to stop his demented plot.

In *Mystery of the Batwoman* (also directed by Geda), a new masked vigilante and femme fatale has swooped into the city. While Batwoman seems to be taking care of business—

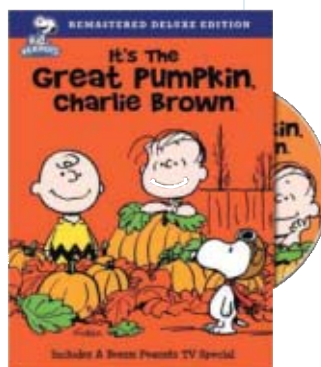


[Release date: Sept. 2]

It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown [Warner, \$19.98]

Directed by Bill Melendez, this classic 1966 Halloween special featuring Snoopy, Charlie and the rest of Charles Schulz's beloved gang has become a nostalgic autumnal tradition for many families. More endearing satire of the human condition than fright fest, *Pumpkin's* classic toon moments—Charlie Brown pulling a rock from his trick-or-treat bag, Linus and Sally patiently waiting out The Great Pumpkin—can now be shared with tech-savvy generations to come in their original beauty and quality.

This remastered deluxe edition DVD features sparkling picture and audio, and comes with featurette docu *We Need a Blockbuster*, *Charlie Brown*; a revealing look (through original interviews with the Schulz family and producers) at the challenges behind the scenes of this

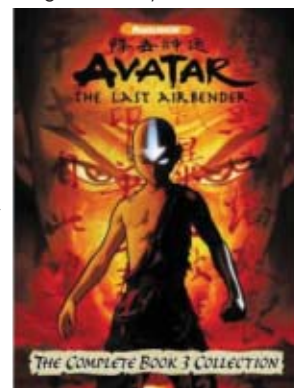


stand-out special.
[Release date: Sept. 2]

Avatar—The Last Airbender: The Complete Book 3 Collection [Nickelodeon, \$79.99]

Arguably the most stunning U.S. series in recent memory, Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko's *Avatar* takes its final DVD bow just shy of a year after it premiered on Nickelodeon. The epic adventure won fans from training-wheel riders to minivan drivers during its all too short but thoroughly satisfying run, and now these fans will be able to complete their collections and relive the magic and action as often as they like.

Book 3 follows Aang as he completes his firebending training under the tutelage of former enemy Zuko, after Aang's group has attempted to lead a failed invasion of the oppressive Fire Nation. Once his training is complete, Aang squares off against the tyrannical Fire Lord and is able to defeat him and bring an end to his cruel war. This set consists of five discs and 21 episodes, including the four *Sozin's Comet* finale episodes, which ought to hold you until M. Night Shyamalan's live-action feature premieres in 2010.
[Release date: Sept. 16]



Blu-ray Bonus

Take your pick: DreamWorks releases *Madagascar* and *Shrek the Third* on September 23, just \$29.99 for each.





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Meet Marvel's Tween Titans

New heroes emerge in the Marvel/Lionsgate DVD movie *The Next Avengers: Heroes of Tomorrow*. **by Ryan Ball**

Marvel Studios and distributor Lionsgate Ent. set a new trend with the 2006 release of the direct-to-DVD adventure *Ultimate Avengers: The Movie*, a PG-13 film that offered a grittier animated look at some of Marvel's most popular comic-book heroes. Now the children of the Avengers have their day in *The Next Avengers: Heroes of Tomorrow*, an action-packed feature that adds a new set of costumed crusaders to the Marvel canon.

Directed by Jay Oliva (*The Invincible Iron Man*, *Doctor Strange*), *Next Avengers* begins with an aging Tony Stark (a.k.a. Iron Man) telling a group of children how the Avengers stood up against a powerful, mechanical conqueror named Ultron, and ultimately fell. The kids turn out to be the children of such Marvel icons as Captain America, Thor, Hawkeye, Wasp and Black Panther. Before their parents were defeated in battle, the children were hidden away in a remote facility where they would train for their inevitable showdown with Ultron. That time comes sooner than expected, and the kids soon find themselves fighting not only Ultron and his mechanized minions, but also robotic versions of their own parents.

Stark is voiced by Tom Kane, who can also be heard in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* as Yoda, a role he has taken over from

Frank Oz. Kane voiced H.O.M.E.R. in the original *Iron Man* animated series, but the father of six says he really took to this portrayal of Stark. "The thing I think I brought to [the role] that may have given me an edge is that this guy, more than probably any time Iron Man has appeared in print or on-screen, is fatherly," he remarks. "For Tony Stark, that's a completely, radically new thing."

Veteran TV toon writer Christopher Yost was given the difficult task of bringing a new generation of Avengers to the screen for younger viewers without turning off the hardcore Marvel fans. Supervising producer Craig Kyle says Yost brought the perfect tone to the project.

For a kids' movie, *Next Avengers* deals with some heavy themes. There's an element of tragedy that stems from a fateful battle that ended the age of heroes and left the film's protagonists orphaned. There's also a lot of fighting, which had the producers coming up with ways to keep the movie appropriate for children.

The climactic scene has the Next Avengers and a couple members of the original Avengers team squaring off against Ultron and the robotic Iron Avengers. The elaborate sequence was laid out by Gary Hartle, who boarded the rousing Hulk fight from the first *Ultimate Avengers* movie. Hartle

served as producer and supervising director on *Next Avengers*, and was really the driving force behind the pic.

Hartle says that the original character models had a harder edge to go along with the fairly dark storyline, but his Marvel colleagues talked him into giving them a softer look. The result, he says, are characters that viewers can care about as they face insurmountable odds and personal hardships.

The animation was completed by Japanese shop The Answer Studio, and there is a good deal of anime influence in the final product. The characters have larger eyes, which Hartle feels contributed to making this the most expressive of the Marvel animated films. "They just look so darn vulnerable and a part of you wants to reach out

and protect them," he points out.

Hartle says he was blown away by the response from fans who previewed *Next Avengers* at Comic-Con in July. He jokes that he sat in the back in order to make a hasty exit in case the screening went badly, but he says it gave him a great vantage point for observing viewer reactions. "There was one woman who couldn't control herself and was crying into her husband's shoulder," Hartle recalls. "This one guy, a big, black guy, was wiping tears out of his eyes. Then I noticed that everyone was slightly tilted forward in their seats because there's so much tension and it keeps building and building."

Hartle, Kyle and the rest of the team behind *Next Avengers* will also be on the edges of their seats as the movie hits retail on Sept. 2. If sales are good, they can move forward with plans to make more DVD movies and possibly a TV series revolving around these characters. Judging by the reaction at Comic-Con, we'll be seeing a lot more of these tween crusaders across various mediums, including comic books. How's that for a twist? ■

Lionsgate Home Entertainment's *The Next Avengers: Heroes of Tomorrow* arrives on DVD and Blu-ray on September 3.

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Masters of Re-Invention

4Kids Entertainment rewrites the rules of the TV landscape this fall—but not without including familiar faves such as the *Turtles*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Spider-Man*.

Last October, the TV animation world witnessed a sea change as the CW said goodbye to Kids' WB! and inked a five-year deal with 4Kids Entertainment. This month, we'll witness how the new dynamics will influence the bottom line for The CW, as well as 4Kids Entertainment's original TV and evolving web presence.

"It's very difficult for anyone to survive these days only as a Saturday morning network entity," says Norman Grossfeld, president of 4Kids Productions. "The Kids' WB! block proved to be primarily a distraction for the CW sales staff to focus on. That business is something that we specialize in, so it proved to be a good fit."

Grossfeld said he and his team are trying

competitors. Streaming video is not replacing TV, but it's a great supplement for the brand."

So what does this all mean in terms of programming and brand image? In the past, many have equated the 4Kids brand with anime imports such as *Pokémon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *One Piece* and *Dinosaur King*. Yet, the company has also branched out in recent years by offering girl-centric shows such as *Winx Club* and comedies such as *Kirby: Right Back at Ya!* and *Viva Piñata*.

According to Grossfeld, we'll continue to see some of 4Kids' most popular characters—the *Ninja Turtles*, *Sonic* and *Yugi*, to name a few—in new packages and environments. "One thing that you'll notice

when you take a look at the lineup on both our TV channels is that the shows are very diverse. What they have in common is that the animation really stands out. The new *Turtles* show offers great quality animation and I really think that *Viva Piñata* is one of the best-looking CG shows on TV right now."

Comedies such as *Skunk Fu!* and *Viva Piñata* will continue to air on The CW4Kids this fall, as will more action-packed shows such as *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and *TMNT: Back to the Sewer*, paired with *Dinosaur King* and *Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's*.

"*Yu-Gi-Oh!* used to air on Kids' WB!, so we decided that the new re-invention of the series would be a good addition to the fall lineup," explains Grossfeld. "The new series was re-invented for the new 5D's [trading card] line. It's set 40 years in the future, and the card game has expanded into a world of supercharged bikes. It's not only about strategy, but speed." Produced by Studio Gallop and directed by Hatsuki Tsuji,

"What we care about is that are shows are watched, so in a way, the online world has made it a more level playing field when it comes to competition from Nick or Cartoon Network."

—Norman Grossfeld, 4Kids Productions' president

to make both networks (Fox 4Kids and CW4Kids) compatible with each other, although the definite lineup for both entities hadn't been formalized at press time. "We're seeing that kids are watching more videos online," he adds. "What we care about is that our shows are watched, so in a way, the online world has made it a more level playing field when it comes to competing with Nick or Cartoon Network."

In another move to increase the shows' web presence, the 4Kids video portal will function as a hulu-like site for kids. "It's about survival. We're offering some exclusive third-party content. We will hold the new episodes of the shows for broadcast only, but then they can go the portal and catch more [Teenage Mutant Ninja] Turtles. That's where you go to catch up on the shows you like. In addition, more marketers and agencies are embracing the format. You have a captive audience and your commercials are not surrounded by other



Dinosaur King



Chaotic: M'arrillian Invasion



Kirby: Right Back at Ya!



the show aired on TV Tokyo from October 2004 through March 2008.

Another new arrival on the CW package is the Russian animated series known as *Smeshariki*, which has been re-named *GOGORiki* for U.S. audiences. The Russian title *Smeshariki* roughly translates as "funny little balls" and refers to the shape of the characters featured in the hugely popular Russian toon, animated by Peterburg Studio.

"It's a beautifully animated project centering on eight circle-shaped animal types," says Grossfeld. "In Russia, the series airs at 7 p.m. every night and the whole family watches it together. It's a situation comedy, and the humor in each six-minute episode comes from simple events that happen in their lives—there are no antagonists, no violence nor cruelty. We think it could have the same appeal as *SpongeBob*. It combines great 2D animation, Flash elements and 3D backgrounds."

Chances are toon fans will also embrace

the new *TMNT: Back to the Sewer* series. After exploring everything that the future had to offer in the *Fast Forward* package last year, they'll get back to their New York City roots. "We realized that after the movie came out last year, fans wanted to see them back in the city, so now we have them arriving safely in the present. However, Master Splinter gets trapped in today's hottest game, and our heroes have to get inside cyberspace to save him."

Fans of the pizza-chomping heroes will also be happy to know that the studio is planning a big 75-minute special to commemorate the Turtles' 25th anniversary. "We thought it would be great idea to have the current version of the Turtles meet all the other versions—the old characters would meet the new ones, there would be

lots of dimension hiding, we would have the characters from the old Fred Wolf series, have the old Shredder meet the new Shredder. Dong Woo Studio is producing the animation in Korea and we're aiming for a top quality DVD release with a TV broadcast window."

Meanwhile, *Chaotic* will continue to air episodes from season one on CW4Kids, while the all new *Chaotic: M'arrillian Invasion* will debut on 4Kids TV, which will also carry BKN's delightful *Biker Mice From Mars*; a continuation of the series introduced back in 1993. Created by Rick Ungar, the

show follows the new adventures of brave mice heroes Throttle, Modo and Vinnie, who have crash landed in Chicago and face the nasty

Catatonians, a cat-like race of creatures which are after the greatest prize on Mars, The Regenerator! As the French like to say, the more things change, the more they stay the same! ■

You can catch a glimpse of 4Kids' *GOGORiki* on AniMagTV.

The new CW4Kids season officially kicks off on Sep. 27.

Here's the lineup:

7:00	Will and Dewitt
7:30	Skunk Fu!
8:00	Viva Piñata
8:30	GOGORiki
9:00	The Spectacular Spider-Man
9:30	TMNT: Back to the Sewer
10:00	Dinosaur King
10:30	Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's
11:00	Chaotic
11:30	Chaotic

The 4KidsTV on FOX is as follows:

8:00	Di-Gata Defenders
8:30	Biker Mice From Mars
9:00	Sonic X
9:30	Sonic X
10:00	Chaotic: M'arrillian Invasion
10:30	TMNT: Fast Forward
11:00	Kirby: Right Back at Ya!
11:30	Winx Club



Yu-Gi-Oh!
5D's





The Not-So-Dark Knight

Warner Bros. Animation brings a sense of humor to *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. by Ryan Ball

With *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*, director Christopher Nolan explores the dark corners of Bob Kane's DC Comics creation, but the property is also known to have a lighter side. The 1960s-era Adam West television series, various cartoon incarnations and even Tim Burton's films of the 1980s all brought a sense of whimsy to the brooding caped crusader. In that tradition, the new Warner Bros. Animation series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* aims to snare younger viewers with brighter colors and an eagerness to have fun with some of DC's most iconic crime fighters.

Batman: The Brave and the Bold may sound like a soap opera for comic geeks, but it's more of an attempt to reach an audience that isn't quite ready for the gritty Batman presented in recent film and television productions. Donning a blue suit reminiscent of earlier comic and cartoon adventures, Gotham's caped crusader joins forces with fellow DC dignitaries including Aquaman, Green Arrow and Plastic Man.

"There are a lot of ways to interpret Batman," says supervising producer James Tucker, who is an avid comic-book collector, himself. "Currently the popular way to do it is to start from the point where this character's parents are murdered, but that's not suitable for what is basically a kids' entertainment show. There are other stories to be told that don't have to focus on that aspect. Also, this show is not strictly a Batman show. [The title] implies a team-up of Batman with other superhero characters, his peers, and how those heroes bring out different aspects of his personality."

In style and tone, *Brave and the Bold* represents

a return to more innocent times. "We wanted to come back to some of the earlier comic-book origins—the mid '40s and '50s all the way up to the '80s—pretty much anything that happened before *The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller's groundbreaking, character-altering take on Batman," Tucker notes. "We went back and found Batman's simpler roots, where he's more of a crime fighter and not a dark, tortured avenger."

You know you're in for a different kind of Batman when you hear the voice of Diedrich Bader coming from behind the cowl. Known mainly for comic roles on television (*The Drew Carey Show*) and film (*Napoleon Dynamite*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*), Bader seems like an odd choice for Bruce Wayne and his heroic alter-ego, but casting director Andrea Romano says he was the first choice for the role.

"I didn't really see Diedrich as playing against type," notes Romano. "People don't necessarily think of him in dramatic roles because he hasn't had the opportunity to explore that much, but I knew he had it in him. Plus, this Batman has a sense of humor."

"My career has been made telling jokes, so I never thought a role like Batman would be in my grasp because I didn't think anybody would hire someone who's known for comedy to do a serious animated character," Bader tells us. He says he's honored to join an elite group of actors who have been fortunate enough to say, "I am Batman." He had the opportunity to work with Batman franchise icon Adam West, who is now part of the *Family Guy* voice cast, on the short-lived, goofball comedy TV series *Danger Theatre*.

Bader says that, like West's Batman, his take on the character is a bit dry and relies more on timing and delivery than actual jokes. We never see Bruce Wayne in this new series, but we often hear his narration. Bader tells us it's like playing two different characters.

"Bruce Wayne has less of a macho, intimidating quality that Batman has to have in order to scare his opponents," notes Bader. "Bruce is more introspective and funnier. He's allowed to be a little more out there than Batman, who has to play it very straight. What's fun is tickling out the sense of humor that Batman already has, that sense of irony that his perspective gives him."

If he weren't playing Batman, Bader says he'd want to be Aquaman, who is voiced in the show by John Di Maggio, the voice of Bender on *Futurama*. "Di Maggio is hilarious doing him and I really covet that role. He hits it out of the park every time and I'm jealous of the chance to be so over-the-top."

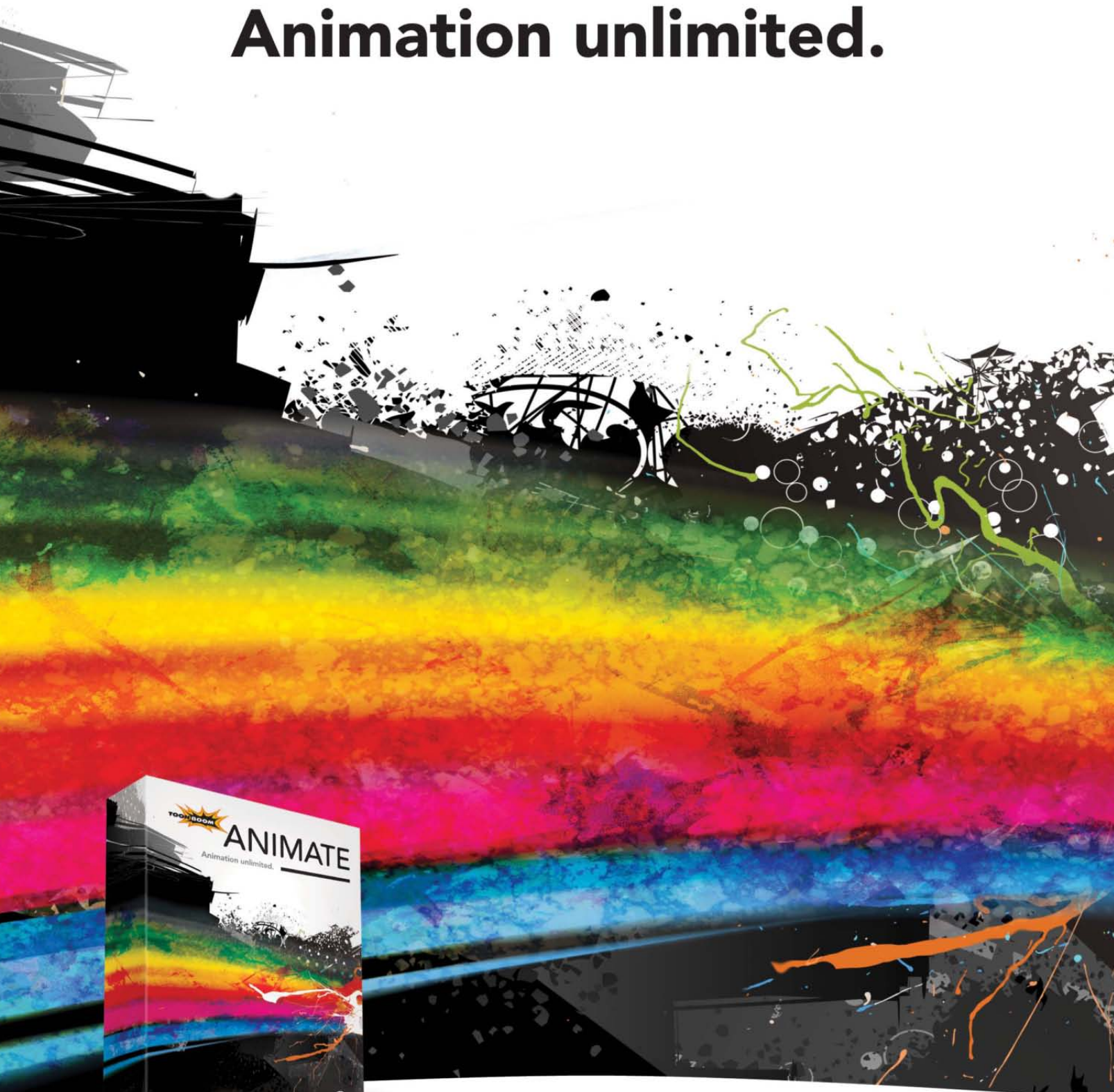
Other heroes making appearances in the show include Plastic Man, voiced by Tom Kenny (*SpongeBob SquarePants*), Green Arrow, Blue Beetle, The Flash, Jonah Hex, Red Tornado and Deadman.

Tucker tells us he wanted *Brave and the Bold* to look like a classic, hand-inked comic book, and was primarily inspired by the work of legendary *Batman* comic illustrator Dick Sprang. "We went with a slightly thicker line around the characters to give [the show] more of an illustrated look," he says. "With the other shows I've worked on in the past—*Justice League*, *Legion of Super Heroes*, *Batman Beyond*—we were doing a live-action show that happened to be animated. And, with this show, I wanted it to have more of an animated quality. The action is a little punchier, the colors are more vibrant and it has more of an old-school comic-book look."

Warner Bros. Animation's last Dark Knight series, *The Batman*, initially met with some negative, knee-jerk reactions from fans of Bruce Timm's much-loved *Batman: The Animated Series*. Tucker says he and his team are faced with the same challenge. "I predict that I'll probably have to go through the same thing where people who loved *The Batman* will be resistant to this take on it." ■

***Batman: The Brave and the Bold* is produced by James Tucker and Linda M. Steiner, and exec produced by Sam Register. Animation directors are Ben Jones, Brandon Vietti and Michael Chang. The series debuts Nov. 14 on Cartoon Network—catch a sneak preview on AniMagTV (www.animag.tv).**

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Fall 2008 TV Toon Preview

If you're having a hard time keeping track of all the new animated shows set to debut on TV this fall season, you're not alone. We tried to make sense of some of the new arrivals, but as we all know, everything in our universe is subject to enormous changes at the last minute. By the look of things, it's going to be one heck of a busy season on the small screen:

4Kids TV

Chaotic: M'Arrillion Invasions**Synopsis:** Chaotic's got a fierce new look: It's all-out anime action for every blistering Battle, every Creature clash and every slammin' Scan Quest. As Tom and Kaz delve deeper into Chaotic, they confront new Creatures, uncover strange new Locations and scan awesome new BattleGear and Mugic. But their games take a shocking, world-rocking turn when a mysterious new tribe is accidentally unleashed.

Premiere Date: Sept. 27, 10 a.m.

Created By: Based on the Chaotic card game

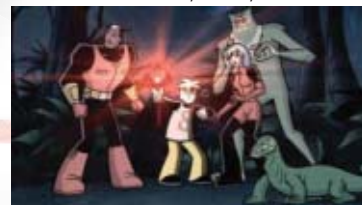


of world-saving adventurer scientists: The Secret Saturdays. They live in a hidden base and are part of a network of scientists who protect the world from evil. But at the end of the day they, and their hyper exotic pets, are just a loving family getting through everyday growing pains.

Production Company: Porchlight Entertainment (Los Angeles)

Created By: Jay Stephens, produced by Fred Schaefer

Premiere Date: Fall 2008



[adult swim]

Superjail!

Synopsis: Superjail is the most violent prison complex in the universe. The staff and inmates cower under the watchful eye of the mysterious Warden, who presides over them like a sadistic Willy Wonka. The psychedelic landscape of Superjail features dangerous criminals, fantastic creatures, bizarre contraptions and frequent riots.

Production Company: Augenblick Studios

Created By: Christy Karacas, Stephen Warbrick and Ben Gruber

Premiere Date: Sept. 28, 11:45 p.m.



Star Wars: The Clone Wars

Synopsis: On the front lines of an intergalactic struggle between good and evil, fans will join Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Padmé Amidala, and brand-new heroes like Anakin's padawan, Ahsoka. Sinister villains—led by Palpatine, Count Dooku and General Grievous—are poised to rule the galaxy. The fate of the universe rests in the hands of the daring Jedi Knights.

Production Company: Calif.-based Lucasfilm Animation, with its studio in Singapore

Created By: Directed by Dave Filoni and produced by Catherine Winder; exec produced by George Lucas

Premiere Date: Oct. 3



BabyFirstTV

Magic Tunnel**Synopsis:** Join Mo, a cute and accident-prone mole on her many fun, action-packed underground adventures. Mo digs her way through underground tunnels, opens mystery doors and discovers exciting worlds of fun and learning. Every door that Mo opens leads her to puzzles, building blocks and many other classic children's games.

Production Company: BabyFirst

Created By: BabyFirst, with its advisory board of child development experts

Premiere Date: Oct. 1



Batman: The Brave and The Bold

Synopsis: So much for a lone wolf! With a team of heroes from across the DC Universe, Batman's delivering nonstop action and adventure with a touch of comic relief as he travels through Gotham and beyond in exciting new adventures. With foes around every corner, Batman will still rely on his stealth, resourcefulness and cool gadgets to bring justice home.

Production Company: Warner Bros. Animation

Created By: Exec producer: Sam Register; original character by Bob Kane and Bill Finger

Premiere Date: Fall 2008



Cartoon Network

Secret Saturday**Synopsis:** Doc, Drew and Zak Saturday are a family

The CW4Kids

GOGORiKi**Synopsis:** This popular Russian cartoon about a group of funny little spherical animals combines 2D, Flash and 3D to share their fun and quirky adventures.



Production Companies: 4Kids, Peterburg Studio
Premiere Date: Sept. 27, 8:30 a.m.
Created By: Peterburg Studio

TMNT: Back to the Sewers**Synopsis:** After travelling through time in *Fast Forward*, everyone's favorite pizza-munching turtle heroes are back in their familiar New York City sewer. But when Master Splinter becomes trapped in an videogame, the Turtles must launch into cyberspace to save him.

Premiere Date: Sept. 27, 9:30 a.m.

Dinosaur Kings**Synopsis:** Max Taylor, son of a paleontologist, is on a quest with his friends Rex and Zoe to travel the world collecting the dinosaurs which are activated by magical stone slabs. They must gather all the dinos before the evil Alpha Gang can use them for their own nefarious purposes.

Production Companies: 4Kids, Sunrise (Japan)

Premiere Date: Sept. 27, 10 a.m.

Created By: Base on the card game by SEGA

Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's**Synopsis:** The future of Dueling is at hand: Turbo Duels in giant stadiums are fought on supercharged motorcycles called D-Wheels. When Yusei, a Dueler from the wrong side of town, enters an epic battle with his rival, a mysterious dragon and its master appear and reveal that Yusei harbors a mystical secret.

Production Companies: 4Kids, Studio Gallop (Japan)

Premiere Date: Sept. 27, 10:30 a.m.

Created By: Based on the Yu-Gi-Oh! card game; directed by Katsumi Ono

Discovery Kids

Willa's Wild Life

Synopsis: Six-year-old Willa is a critter collector who brings home stray penguins and rabbits instead of cats and dogs—she's adopted so many exotic animals, there's barely room in Willa's room for Willa! The animals are not just her friends; they offer advice and give her their unique and often humorous takes on problem-solving.

Production Company: Nelvana Studio

Created By: Dan Yaccarino, based on his book *An Octopus Followed Me Home*

Premiere Date: Sept. 1, 6 p.m.



Discovery Latin America

Fishtronaut

Synopsis: Fishtronaut, the secret agent fish, explores the world's many mysteries above and below the water on his slimy, furry and gooey

adventures. Kids at home are encouraged to get in on the fun interactively by tapping and clapping along with Fishtronaut and his friends.

Production Companies: TV PinGin in assoc. with Discovery Kids

Created By: Celia Catunda and Kiko Mistrorigo

Premiere Date: Spring 2009



E! (CanWest)

Producing Parker

Synopsis: This edgy send-up of the daytime talk show genre follows the outrageous adventures of an overworked and underpaid TV producer

as she manages her boss's delicate ego, the quirky production crew and all the behind-the-scenes antics. Starring Kim Cattrall (*Sex and the City*) and Kirsten Booth (*MVP*).

Production Companies: Breakthrough Animation/Philippine Animation Studio in assoc. with CanWest Media

Created By: Laura Kosterksi, Carolyn



Newman, Kevin Gillis

Premiere Date: Spring 2009

HBO

The Life and Times of Tim

Synopsis: A 20-something New Yorker dreams of getting ahead at work, but his plans are sabotaged by unreliable characters who befriend him along the way. This half-hour show is voiced by Steve Dildarian, Mary Jane Otto, Peter Giles, Matt Johnson, Edie McClurg and Nick Krool.

Production Companies: HBO, Warner Bros. TV, Werner/Gold/Miller Productions

Premiere Date: Sept. 28, 11 p.m.

Created By: Steven Dildarian



Nick Jr.

Dora the Explorer: "Snow Princess"

Synopsis: Dora, Boots and the snowflake fairy are off to save la Princesa Sabrina and her snowy forest from a mean witch who has taken her magic snow crystal. With help from pirate piggies and Paj's dog sled they finally reach the tower and fool the witch into giving back the crystal. Can viewers help Dora use the crystal before the icy forest melts away?!

Production Company: Nickelodeon Studios

Created By: Chris Gifford, Valerie Walsh and Eric Weiner

Premiere Date: Nov. 2008

The Wonder Pets!: "Save the Bengal Tiger!"

Synopsis: The Pets get a call from a young Bengal tiger in India who has a thorn in her foot. When they enlist Raji, Puller of Thorns, the tiger doesn't want a tiny mouse's help. The Pets show the snooty tiger that all living things are important and remove the thorn—then celebrate with curry celery and a big Bollywood musical number.

Production Company: Little Airplane Productions

Created By: Josh Selig (Little Airplane)

Premiere Date: Sept. 8, half-hour special

The Wonder Pets!: "Save the Nutcracker!"

Synopsis: On Christmas Eve, a Mouse King emerges from a picture book in the classroom and steals the Wonder Pets' Nutcracker. The Pets chase him into the book, dancing to Tchaikovsky's ballet music, and persuade him to give back the Nutcracker and be happy with all he already has. On Christmas morning, the Pets crack open a nut, which unleashes a magical surprise.

Production Company: Little Airplane Prod.

Created By: Josh Selig

Premiere Date: Dec. 2008

Nickelodeon

SpongeBob SquarePants: "WhoBob WhatPants"

Synopsis: SpongeBob, Bikini Bottom's most beloved sponge, is struck with amnesia and goes missing! As his distraught friends search for him, SpongeBob wanders the ocean, a stranger in his own pants. Stumbling into New Kelp City, he inadvertently defeats a ruthless gang leader (voiced by Ray Liotta) and becomes mayor—will SpongeBob remember who he really is and return home, or stay to rule New Kelp City forever?



Production Companies: Nickelodeon Studios, United Plankton Pictures

Created By: Stephen Hillenburg

Premiere Date: Oct. 2008

Nicktoons Network

Making Fiends

Synopsis: This offbeat Flash series centers on two girls: Charlotte and Vendetta. Vendetta makes fiends to instill fear in their dreary town of Clamburg and despises cheerful Charlotte for always foiling her most brilliant and fiendish plans. Meanwhile, Charlotte loves her new town, is oblivious to the danger that Vendetta poses to her and thinks that all of Vendetta's fiends are rather cute.

Production Companies: Nickelodeon

Premiere Date: Oct. 4; Interstitials will also air on Nickelodeon during Shocktober

Created By: Amy Winfrey, based on her *Making Fiends* online films



NOGGIN

Toot & Puddle

Synopsis: Toot and Puddle are two very different best friends who find adventure wherever they go: Toot's the world-traveler and Puddle, the backyard explorer. Their wonder-filled world of exploration encourages



young children to value other people's perspectives as well as their own, and introduces exotic new locales to expand their awareness of the variety of people and places in the world.

Production Companies: National Geographic Kids Entertainment and Mercury Filmworks

Created By: Based on the books by Holly Hobbie

Premiere Date: Nov. 16

PBS KIDS

Martha Speaks

Synopsis: Based on the best-selling books by Susan Meddaugh, *Martha Speaks* follows the adventures of Martha, a beloved family dog, whose appetite for alphabet soup gives her the power of human speech. Targeting 4- to 7-year-olds, the engaging episodes are designed to help bolster young children's vocabulary.

Production Companies: WGBH Boston and Studio B Productions Inc.

Created By: Senior exec producer Carol Greenwald (WGBH Boston), exec producers Chris Bartleman and Blair Peters (Studio B Prod.), creative producer Susan Meddaugh

Premiere Date: Sept. 1



Sid the Science Kids **Synopsis:** The energetic and inquisitive Sid starts each episode with a new question ("Why are my shoes shrinking?" "Why do bananas get mushy?") and embarks on a fun-filled day of finding answers with the help of family and friends, using a practical in-school science curriculum, music and humor to celebrate children's natural curiosity about science in everyday life.

Production Companies: The Jim Henson Company, KCET Los Angeles

Created By: The Jim Henson Company

Premiere Date: Sept. 1



qubo

Turbo Dogs

Synopsis: Racerville is a world filled with dogs of different shapes, sizes, temperaments and pedigrees—a lot like the human world! The five Turbo Dogs are fast-racing canine heroes in this furry town, where



everyone from the TV announcer dog to the concession stand dog is brought together by a passion for motor sports.

Production Companies: Scholastic Media, CCI Ent., HuHu Studios

Created By: Based on the book *Racer Dogs* by Bob Kolar

Premiere Date: Oct. 5 on the qubo Channel; Oct. 3 at 3:30 p.m. on ION; Oct. 4 at noon on NBC; Oct. 4 at 8 a.m. in Spanish on Telemundo

TELETOON

Metajets

Synopsis: In the sky cities of the future, fans all over the globe follow the



Aerial Racing Circuit, where four of the world's best pilots are in a continuous race for first place on the track. Off the track, they become an elite flying team, the Metasquadron, and transform their lightening fast jets into battle-ready fliers to protect people from harm—usually at the hands of the evil General Raven.

Production Company: Cookie Jar Entertainment

Created By: Co-production with Cookie Jar Entertainment and Sunwoo (Korea)

Premiere Date: Spring 2009

World of Quest**Synopsis:** Pampered Prince Nestor is on a mission to save his father and his kingdom, with the help of the square-jawed hero Quest, who has no desire to protect the spoiled prince. But Quest is the planet's greatest warrior and the only hero able to wield the Shatter Soul Sword that can defeat the evil Lord Spite and save the kingdom ... If they find it, that is.

Production Companies: Cookie Jar Entertainment, TELETOON and Kids WB! co-production

Created By: Cookie Jar Entertainment; based on the successful online comic by Jason T. Kruse

Premiere Date: Sept. 1, 6 p.m. ET/PT; airs M-F at 6 p.m., Sundays at 9 a.m. ET/PT



Treehouse

The Adventures of Bert and Ernie

Synopsis: In this new series of five-minute interstitials, claymation versions of Bert and Ernie use their imaginations to travel to far-off places in a fun spin on these familiar friends.

Production Companies: Sesame Street, Misseri Studios

Created By: Sesame Street

Premiere Date: Sept. 2, 4 p.m.; airs Tues. and Thursdays



Toot & Puddle

Synopsis: Join the joyful adventures of two fun-loving, inquisitive but very different best friends (who happen to be pigs): Toot is a glob-trotting adventurer who is constantly on the lookout for a new challenge. Puddle is the backyard explorer of the pair; although he enjoys travelling, he prefers to find fun closer to home.

Production Companies: Toot & Puddle Productions (c/o Mercury Film Works)

Created By: Based on the books by Hollie Hobby

Premiere Date: Sept. 2, 10:30 a.m.

YTV

The Mighty B!

Synopsis: Follow along on the adventures of 10-year-old Bessie Higgensbottom, the world's most ambitious Honeybee scout, who wears her uniform every single day, leads her troop with zeal and has earned more Bee Badges than any Honeybee in history. However, a bunch of badges still elude her, and Bessie won't rest until she's earned them all.

Production Company: Nickelodeon Studios

Created By: Erik Wiese, Cynthia True and Amy Poehler

Premiere Date: Sept. 7, 10:30 a.m.



Wolverine and the X-Men

Synopsis: When an explosive event shatters the lives of the X-Men and takes away their mentor, the beaten heroes decide to walk away from it all. But after a rare glimpse into the future, Wolverine takes the lead and reunites the broken band to embark upon the ultimate mission: Preventing the world's destruction.

Production Companies: Entertainment Value Associates, First Serve Toonz

Created By: Marvel Entertainment

Premiere Date: Sept. 6, 7 p.m.

The Mr. Men Show

Synopsis: Welcome to Dillydale, home of Mr. Men and Little Misses where every day brings new and exciting adventures for the town's many personalities. Whether you're happy, messy, grumpy or naughty—it doesn't matter what mood you're in—in Dillydale, there is always someone waiting for you.

Production Companies: Chorion Silver Lining, Renegade Animation

Created By: Based on the books by Roger Hargreaves

Premiere Date: Sept. 3, 2:30 p.m.; airs Mon., Wed. and Fridays ■

The Mini Magnificent Seven

Korea's Daewon Media and Canada's Cookie Jar join forces to deliver the small wonders of *Noonbory*.

by Ramin Zahed

Sometimes, the most commonplace objects or events can inspire a creative mind. Take, for example, the case of Sung-Wook Jang, the artist who came up with the idea behind the new Daewon Media/Cookie Jar animated series, *Noonbory and the Super 7*. Jang created the concept after observing a snowflake landing gently on a leaf. Ten years later, he can finally see his ideas come to animated life as the show arrives at TV markets such as MIPCOM Jr.

"The inspiration for the show goes back to the seven key oriental elements of moon, fire, water, tree, metal, earth and sun," says Hoyoung Jung, manager of Daewon Media's international department. "The show's seven heroes (the Super Bories) each possess a super-sense—sight, taste, smell, hearing, touch and, of course, common sense and a little non-sense as well! These super-sensors use their unique skills to keep the land of Tobalooba safe from the silly villains who are constantly causing trouble."

Daewon animates the 52 x 11-minute (26 x 22) series in Korea in conjunction with Designstorm Animation Studio, while Cookie Jar handles the scripts, voice work and post-production in Canada. (Cookie Jar and Daewon also collaborate on the popular series *Magi-Nation* which airs on The CW4Kids on Saturdays). *Noonbory* has already been snapped up by BBC Kids,

Knowledge Network, Access TV and SCN in Canada and will air on Korea's educational channel EBS in 2009.

Ann Austen, Cookie Jar Entertainment's senior VP of development and TV, says she was won over by the show's fanciful characters and their rich, colorful world. "The design of the series is gorgeous, and the characters are whimsical and fun," she notes. "The show takes all of

as a group. "Designing the various settings of their fantasy world was a tricky challenge as well, with all the creative ideas flowing in so many directions," he says. During the show's production, the animation team worked hard to create smooth movements for the characters during the action sequences. "We also spent a lot of time making sure the show conformed to preschool safety standards in the country," adds Jung. "There were different standards for various countries, so our writers and animators had to go through multiple trial-and-error run-throughs."

The show's producers are preparing to launch aggressive digital multi-platform, casual gaming, licensing and toy programs as the show makes its TV debut next year. "We plan to continue building brand awareness of *Noonbory* in the next seven years!" adds Jung. "Once the show makes its debut, we would also like to produce a children's musical based on the characters and premise."

Jung believes that *Noonbory* is the perfect example of how Korean companies can work with international partners like Cookie Jar to deliver top-notch animation for audiences all over the world. "Korea is now overflowing with animated projects and characters, which increases opportunities," he notes. "Obviously, the key issues

for us are originality of the story, new visual styles and production quality. However, due to the abundance of media, more viewers are tuned in to various entertainment platforms, such as the Internet, games and hand-helds. The good news is that the Korean government is backing up the content business through various channels, and there have been many success stories for Korean animation in the global market." ■

Visit thecookiejarcompany.com or Daewonmedia.com for more info.

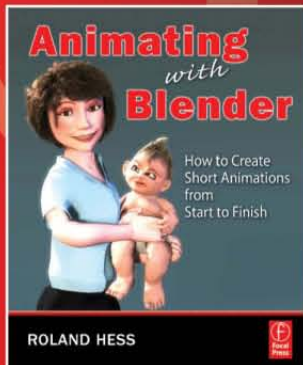


the fun conventions of the superhero genre and interprets them for the youngest viewers. Using the senses as the jumping off point for the episodes' adventures makes the series both age appropriate and really inventive."

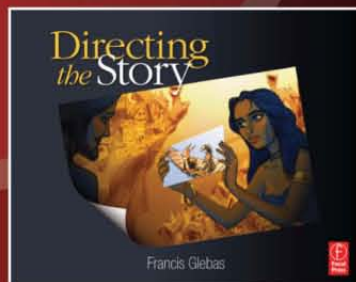
According to Jung, one of the production's biggest challenges was creating unique personalities for the show's seven main characters while making sure they mixed well together

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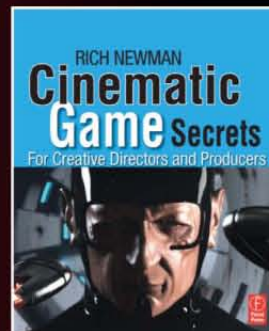
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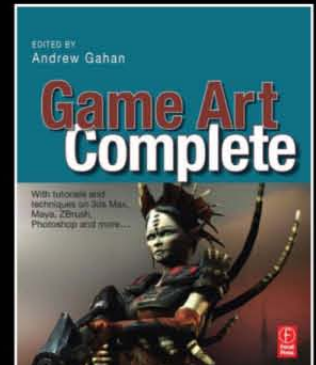
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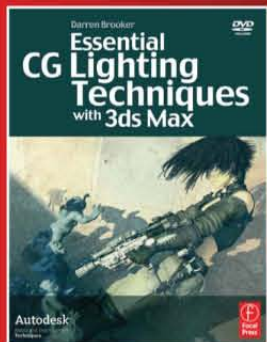
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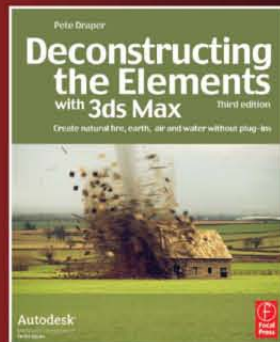
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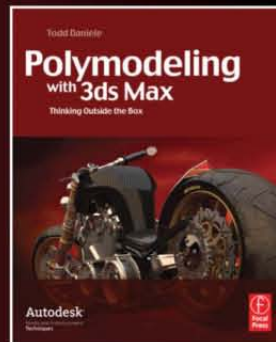
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The Scoop on This Year's Top Toon Buyers

Compiled by Mercedes Milligan

They have the power to buy or greenlight animated TV series for global consumption, so if you're in the business of making toons or just curious to learn more about these Toon Town players, you may want to clip this handy Animag public service feature!

Ann Austen

The Cookie Jar Company
SVP Creative Development

Years in the biz: 20

Hometown: Glendale, CA

Favorite animated show of 2008: Aside from all of our Cookie Jar titles, *Phineas and Ferb*.

Recently acquired titles: *Tales From Cryptville*.

Things I look for in a show: Humor, heart, great characters and stuff that blows up.

What I hate to see in a show: Five kids with super powers.

My dream vacation: Anywhere I can sleep more than four hours a night.

The movie that changed my life: *E.T.*

Favorite band: Social Distortion.

Shows I always TiVo: *The Daily Show*; *Top Chef*; *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

The gizmo I can't live without: My self-grinding coffee maker.

What I love about my job: Making children happy.

The most annoying trend of the year: High gas prices.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Filling out questionnaires!



Tales From Cryptville

Caroline Tyre

TELETOON Canada Inc.
Director of Programming

Years in the biz: 11

Hometown: Trenton, Ontario

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Rick & Steve: The Happiest Gay Couple in all the World*.

Recently acquired titles: *Chowder*, *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, *American Dad*.

Things I look for in a show: Lots of laughs for kids and action for bigger kids.

What I hate to see in a show: The phrases "...and chaos ensues!" or "Available in NTSC and HD" used as key selling points.

My dream vacation: One of those private glass-bottom huts in the Maldives, only reachable by boat, where I can stare at the ocean floor while getting a massage.

The TV shows that changed my life: *The Hills* and *John Adams*—I totally dig history now.

Favorite performer: I'm still rooting for poor Britney. I'm sure she can turn herself around.

Shows I always TiVo: *Entourage*, *Mad Men*, *The Wire*, *Lost*.

The gizmo I can't live without: NIKE + [iPod gear] for running.

What I love about my job: The people! We have an amazing team, plus I get to meet so many people from around the globe.

The most annoying trend of the year: *Greatest American Dog*.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: That's a bit personal don't you think?



Chowder

Jules Borkent

Nickelodeon, MTV Networks International
SVP Global Acquisitions and International Programming

Years in the biz: 15

Hometown: Zutphen, The Netherlands

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

Recently acquired titles: *H2O*, *Lucky Fred*, *Little Kingdom*, *Sean the Sheep*.

Things I look for in a show: Age appropriate comedy, kid-relatable situations.

What I hate to see in a show: Predictability.

My dream vacation: Italy.

The movie/book/TV show that changed my life: *Chinatown* / *Dance to the Music of Time* / *Twin Peaks*.

Favorite performer: Tom Waits.

Show I always TiVo: *Mad Men*.

The gizmo I can't live without: iPod.

What I love about my job: The sheer luxury of being able to choose great content from anywhere around the world.

The most annoying trend of the year: Spin-offs.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Ballroom dancing—it's a hidden talent!



Little Kingdom

John Rooney

YTV, Corus Entertainment Inc.
Director of Programming

Years in the biz: 18

Hometown: Toronto

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Robot Chicken*.

Recently acquired titles: *The Mighty B!*, *Wolverine & The X-Men*, *The Mr. Men Show*

Things I look for in a show: Shows that make me laugh out loud move to the top of the list; shows that make me smile.

What I hate to see in a show: Shows that are dumbed down for kids.

My dream vacation: A resort on any island that has sun, sand and a private beach.

The TV show that changed my life: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Favorite band: Erasure.

Shows I always TiVo: *The Amazing Race*, *Survivor*, *Brothers & Sisters*.

The gizmo I can't live without: Laptop.

What I love about my job: I get to watch cartoons for a living! You can't beat that.

The most annoying trend of the year: *The Hills* and everything attached to it.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Sarcasm isn't a hobby or talent, is it?



Nick Wilson

Five TV
Director of Children's Programs

Years in the biz: Ha Ha!

Hometown: Windlesham

Favorite animated show of 2008: *The Mr. Men Show*.

Recently acquired titles: *Mr. Men*, *Bert and Ernie*, *Olivia*, *Chiro*.

Things I look for in a show: Story, story and then story.

What I hate to see in a show: Bland CGI.

My dream vacation: Fly fishing in the north of Scotland or in New Zealand.

The movie/book that changed my life: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Favorite band/performer: Blondie/Bob Marley.

Shows I always TiVo: Don't have Tivo.

The gizmo I can't live without: Watch.

What I love about my job: Telling stories.

The most annoying trend of the year: Badly modernizing classic properties.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Fly fishing, and I do character voices!



The Mr. Men Show

Rick Rodriguez

qubo
President and General Manager

Years in the biz: 26

Hometown: New York and Los Angeles.

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Turbo Dogs* from Scholastic, CCI and Huhu.

Recently acquired titles: *Sheldon* from Entertainment Rights, produced by Shellhut Entertainment.

Things I look for in a show: Engaging storylines and characters, distinctive production style, educational content and positive values.

What I hate to see in a show: Bland character design, static camerawork, negative messages.

My dream vacation: A month on the beach of a remote tropical paradise (with free wi-fi and reliable broadband!).

The movie/book/TV show that changed my life: Far too many to name...

Favorite performer: Kate Bush.

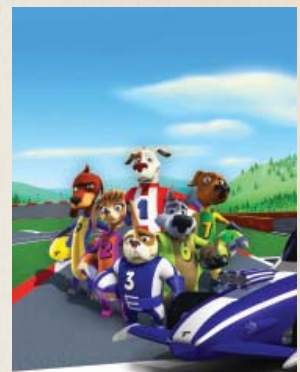
Shows I always TiVo: *Lost*, *24*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Mad Men*.

The gizmo I can't live without: Any device that gets me online whenever and wherever I want.

What I love about my job: Working with talented creatives from around the world to develop entertaining, quality programs with a strong educational mission.

The most annoying trend of the year: The continuing erosion of children's television ratings on U.S. broadcast television and the growing reliance on live-action pop stars to reach younger and younger audiences.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: I double as an IT person and could be hired by the local Geek Squad. I can model (poorly) in Maya, Modo, 3ds Max and XSI | Softimage. I collect vintage computers.



Turbo Dogs

Michael A. Carrington

CBeebies, BBC
Controller

Years in the biz: 21

Hometown: London, U.K.

Favorite animated show of 2008: *3rd & Bird* by Little Airplane Company; it's totally charming.

Recently acquired titles: *Harry & Toto*, *DirtGirlWorld*, *Storytrain*, *Postman Pat SDS*, *Chuggington*, *Louie*, *Bob the Builder VII*, *64 Zoo Lane III*.

Things I look for in a show: Compelling but simple stories, age appropriate design and a sense of humor.

What I hate to see in a show: Copy-cat concepts.

My dream vacation: Feet-up under an olive tree in Tuscany, with a glass of Chianti in one hand and my iPhone in the other!

The book that changed my life: *The Rainbow Goblins* by Ul De Rico—those goblins are naughty!

Favorite band/performer: Tokio Hotel / Johnny Depp in *Sweeney Todd*—if only I could sing!

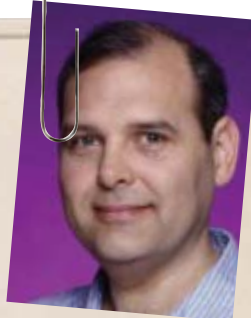
Shows I always TiVo: I have eclectic tastes; *Summer Heights High*, *Heroes* and *The Wire*.

The gizmo I can't live without: iPhone case with rechargeable battery—phew!

What I love about my job: Watching children being thrilled and delighted by our programs and all the other stuff we do to entertain them.

The most annoying trend of the year: The renaissance in bicycle riding—some of those riders are so aggressive.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Back flipping out of the way of bicycles!



Sebastian Debertin

KI.KA - Kinderkanal of ARD and ZDF

Head of Fiction/Acquisition & Co-Production and Deputy Managing & Programming Director

Years in the biz: From the Stone Age, or "since the world was still black and white."

Hometown: Animanía City

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Cosmic Quantum Ray* and *Kung Fu Panda*.

Recently acquired titles: *Jibber Jabber*, *Care Bears* (series + feature), *Bernard* season two, *Pocoyo* season two and *Dive, Olly, Dive!* season two.

Things I look for in a show: 25 fps.

What I hate to see in a show: 23 fps or less.

My dream vacation: Hotel Laluna, Morne Rouge, Grenada.

The book that changed my life: The book of books—The Bible.

Favorite band/performer: Al Green, Jamiroquai, Style Council.

Shows I always TiVo: *The Late Night Show with Harald Schmidt*.

The gizmo I can't live without: My new lawnmower.

What I love about my job: Making great shows that entertain and educate the next generation (new Schnubblings).

The most annoying trend of the year: People e-mailing with Blackberry (which means they respond often too quick without thinking enough and often are very rude).

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Lawn-mowing and creating new interesting jams (like this season's new cherry-raspberry jam—delicious!).



Jocelyn Hamilton

Corus Entertainment Inc.

VP Content, Corus Kids

Years in the biz:

20

Hometown:

Toronto

Favorite animated show of 2008:

The Mighty B!

Recently acquired titles: *L.O.S.E.*, *H2O*, *Kid vs. Kat*, *Big and Small*, *SciQ*, *Toot & Puddle* and many more.

Things I look for in a show: Clear concept with lots of funny.

What I hate to see in a show: No concept, just pretty pictures ... Oh, and monkeys.

My dream vacation: Italian Riviera with a good book, great friend and caprese.

The TV show that changed my life: *The Flintstones*.

Favorite performer: Bryan Adams

Shows I always TiVo: *Oprah*, *The Office*—anything starting with "O."

What I love about my job: We all get to be kids again.

The most annoying trend of the year: Twitter ... What's up with that?



Toot & Puddle

continued on page 36

ANIMATION



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Adina Pitt

Cartoon Network &
Boomerang, USA

VP, Content Acquisitions & Co-
Productions

Years in the biz: 15

Hometown: San Juan, Puerto Rico

Favorite animated show of 2008:

Family Guy.

Recently acquired titles: *Total Drama Island, Skunk Fu.*

Things I look for in a show: Great writing; solid production values; good pacing; a fresh point of view.

What I hate to see in a show: Gratuitous violence; shows that talk down to kids.

My dream vacation: One without my BlackBerry and cell phone.

The movie that changed my life: *Star Wars.*

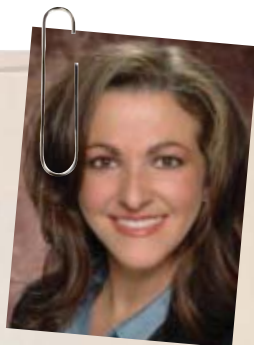
Favorite performer: Alejandro Sanz.

Shows I always TiVo: *Ugly Betty, Grey's Anatomy, Entourage.*

The gizmo I can't live without: My BlackBerry.

What I love about my job: The people, the content, the process, the pace.

The most annoying trend of the year: Receiving YouTube videos as pilots for kids shows.



Total Drama Island

Brenda Nietupski

Treehouse/Discovery Kids Can.,
Corus Entertainment Inc.

Director of Programming

Years in the biz: 19

Hometown: Toronto

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Shaun the Sheep.*

Recently acquired titles: *Nouky & Friends, The Adventures of Bert & Ernie (I love Ernie), In the Night Garden, Yo Gabba Gabba.*

Things I look for in a show: Positive tone, something new, child's perspective, does it make me smile or laugh out loud.

What I hate to see in a show: Forced education. Education that is not a lot of fun. Learning should be absolutely fun for kids.

My dream vacation: Greece, Italy, France, Spain, U.K.—any one will do. Beach please.

The movie/book that changed my life: *Charlotte's Web / Bambi.*

Favorite performer: Prince.

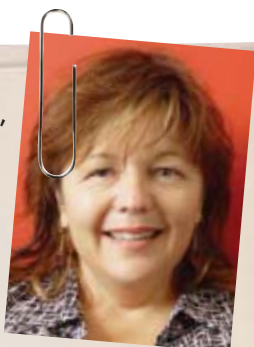
Shows I always TiVo: *Ghost Whisperer.*

The gizmo I can't live without: My new iPhone.

What I love about my job: It's creative, I get to watch cartoons and there are terrific people in the industry.

The most annoying trend of the year: Baby TV.

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: Shoe shopping—very talented. Hobbies are movie going, Sudoku, yoga.



The Adventures of Bert and Ernie

Paul Robinson

KidsCo

Managing Director, Worldwide

Years in the biz: 20 plus!

Hometown: Camberley, Surrey, England

Favorite animated show of 2008: *Phineas and Ferb.*

Recently acquired titles: *Wallace and Gromit, Z Squad, Dino Squad, Future is Wild, Jacob Two Two.*

Things I look for in a show: An original take that shows an innate understanding of a kid's point of view, underpinned by great storytelling and characters that you have an emotional connection with.

What I hate to see in a show: Shoot 'em up shows which are just fighting and excessive violence that have neither good role models nor good creativity.

My dream vacation: My dream holiday is no BlackBerry (in complete contradiction to my other reply) with lots of sun, sand and no work whatsoever ... Bali or Barbados being my favorite places.

The movie/book/TV show that changed my life:

My life was changed by radio—as a listener, I loved the relationship that you can establish between DJ and listener that is intimate and can influence you to change your behavior. I bought records because DJs such as Kenny Everett, Roger Scott and Alan Freeman championed them—few media can do that. My life-changing movie was *Toy Story*; it made me realize that I wanted to work in children's animation and television.

Favorite performer: Bruce Springsteen—his first ever Hammersmith Odeon concert in 1975 made me realize that there was exciting rock music coming out of the U.S. and he is still a consummate live performer more than 30 years on.

Shows I always TiVo: *Star Trek, Lost, The Apprentice, Dr. Who, movies.*

The gizmo I can't live without: I can't live without my BlackBerry. I first got one in 1999 when at Disney I started working with the team in Los Angeles to manage the eight hour time difference with London, and I use it every day. Without it I feel like I have lost a limb.

[Editor's note: Paul even responded to our request via BlackBerry—someone get this man to a clinic!]

What I love about my job: It has amazing variation, ranging from closing a deal with a satellite or cable platform, working with my program director on a program acquisition or an on-air creative, to presenting to the Board of Directors. But ultimately the buzz comes from seeing the smiles on the faces of the children who watch our shows or the approval of parents who appreciate that KidsCo is a quality, learning-based, safe environment for their children.

The most annoying trend of the year: People talking down to the children's TV industry—it's nonsense, we are thriving!

Do you have any unusual hobbies/talents?: I have very few talents, but I do love my podcasts for the *Media Guardian* where I get the chance to talk uncensored on the media; and, although I rarely get the chance, I am not too tardy as a DJ in a club or on the radio. ■



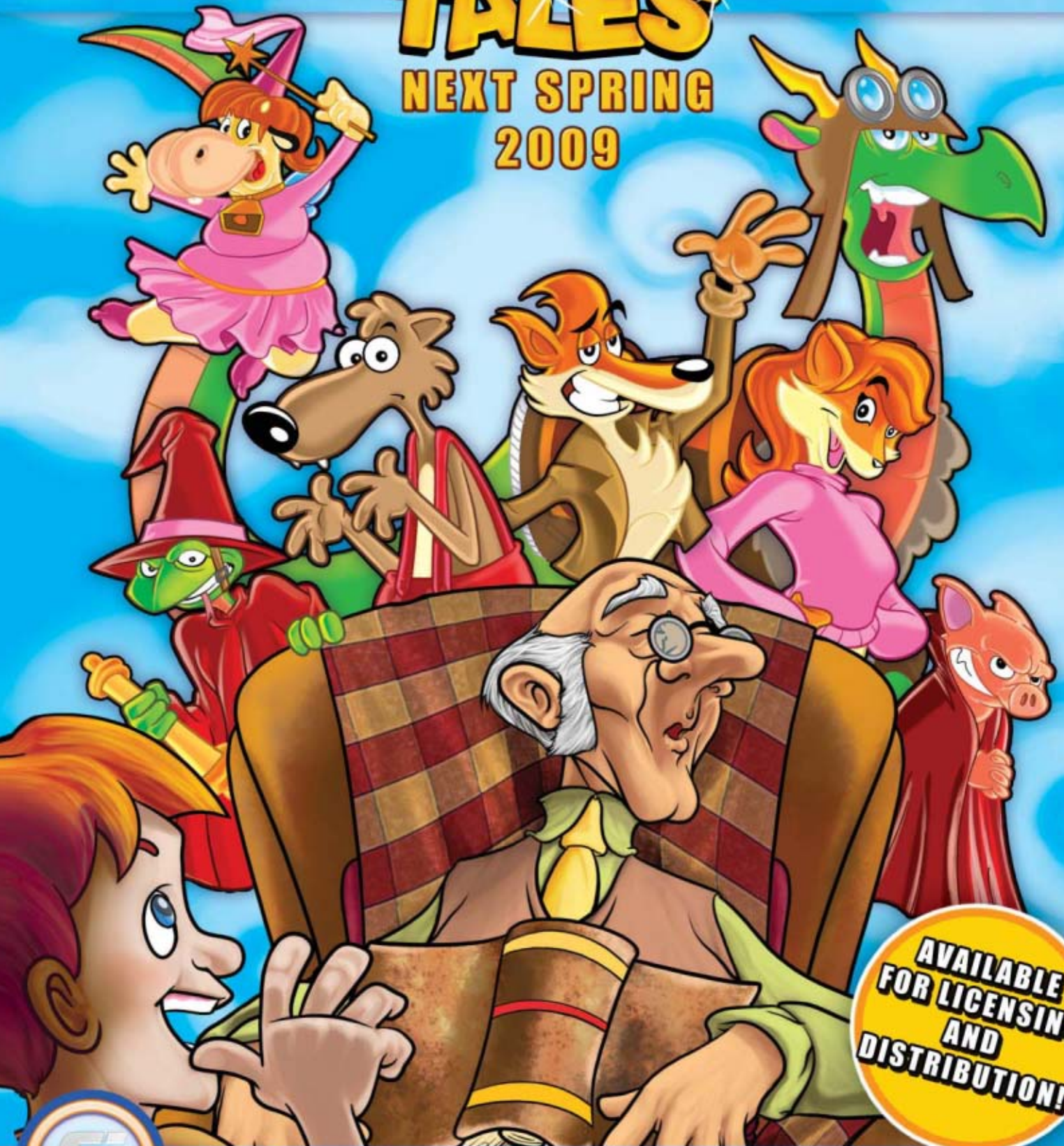
Dino Squad

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[adult swim]min' in the Slammer

Flash floods full of killer sharks, androgynous jailers and teleporting albino twins: It's not a bad trip, it's *Superjail!*

by Mercedes Milligan

Imagine you're Charlie visiting Willy Wonka's chocolate factory: The colors dazzle, the devices amaze ... Now imagine that the factory is the world's most hyper advanced jail-slash-volcanic island, the Oompa Loompas have been replaced with over-muscled "women" with questionable bulges and every day ends with a an all-out, drag-down, limb-rending brawl to the death instead of a jaunty tune. Welcome to *Superjail!*

Created by MTV Animation veterans Christy

Karacas (*Daria*) and Stephen Warbrick (*Celebrity Deathmatch*) and writer Ben Gruber (*Speed Racer: The Next Generation*), *Superjail!* is adult animation boiled down to its essence. Psychedelic colors and morphing characters combine with unrestrained sexuality, bodily functions and violence to create the sheer wrongness which surrounds the jail's hapless Warden on his megalomaniacal misadventures within the compound. The energy and shock value are so intense that by the time you notice

the skillful hand animation (courtesy of animation director Aaron Augenblick and his Augenblick Studios), the episode is over and you find yourself wanting to watch it again.

"One thing we really cared about was making it look hand drawn and 'non-computery,'" says co-creator and director Karacas, whose drawing style steered the show's design, "It's actually 'drawn' and 'animated,' not some object with a mouth that just talks and blinks and floats." Editor and After Effects wizard Warbrick adds that the amount of straight animation in each episode is what really sets *Superjail!* apart: "Hell, even the opening credits are different every week!"

The show spawned from a chain of events leading back to Karacas's days at the

Rhode Island School of Design, when his '97 festival-hopping short *Space War* caught MTV Animation's attention. Working there he met Warbrick and eventually the two created another short, *Barfight*. "We entered it in the festivals, but it got rejected from every one," Karacas admits. But, in 2006, the rejected film became their Golden Ticket: "Our friend and co-worker, Dave Hughes, edited [*Barfight*] for us," explains Warbrick, "After MTV Animation closed, Dave went to

ing people I've ever met," says Karacas) is done with a combination of hand drawing, Flash, "moxie" and "a lot of underpaid labor." Watching the show, one assumes that the main production challenge would be getting approval on all the outrageous antics, but that's just not so: "I actually can't believe the stuff that's not been rejected," notes Karacas, "They're more worried about words on signs or copyright stuff than people getting ripped in half and skinned alive or man-woman guards with bulging genitalia." The real challenges are far more universal: Speed and stamina. "Every aspect of the show is on such a tight deadline that it was just go, go, go," says Warbrick, "There wasn't a lot of time to second guess—which, overall, can be a good thing."

For Karacas, the challenge was to keep life in *Superjail* completely insane for 10 lightning-paced episodes: "So many times you're kicking around ideas and a second

after you say, 'That's a great idea,' you'll think, 'Oh, wait, I've seen that before,' ... You have to either drop it or get creative and combine ideas—tweak 'em in some way to keep them fresh and interesting."

Superjail! definitely pushes the boundaries of TV content, but it also harkens back to a time when animation was celebrated for its freedom, and for the kind of visual feats that couldn't be accomplished any other way. Karacas is eager to distance his show from the "sit-com type" adult-targeted shows which rely on raunchy dialogue to appeal to grown-ups otherwise

biased against cartoons. "Once you make a show, it's not art—it's commerce. But there's a middle ground you can get to, I think, if you can stumble into the right people at the right place and time."

"I hope [the show] brings back the idea of animation to the companies that produce cartoons," Warbrick sums up, "It seems that motion tweening or puppeting has passed for animation for quite a while now. *Superjail!* is proof that even on a small budget, you can animate traditionally." ■

***Superjail!* airs Sept. 28, 11:45 p.m. on [adult swim]. View the full Q&A with the creators (and show clip) at www.animationmagazine.net.**



work for Cartoon Network down in Atlanta and I guess he showed it to the right people, 'cause they contacted us."

The "right people" turned out to be [adult swim] head of development Nick Weidenfeld, who arranged to meet the duo in NYC, even though the creators didn't yet have a pitch in mind. "We kicked around ideas and 'jail' came up," Karacas explains, "We were like, 'Maybe it's the most insane jail ever, you know, a 'superjail.''" After over a year of development, the team ended up with exactly that.

In addition to their individual duties, Karacas and Warbrick also write the show with Gruber. The animation by Augenblick Studios ("Some of the most talented and hardwork-

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Junior Snapshots

As we get ready for MIPCOM Junior, the big children's programming market at the Carlton Hotel in Cannes (Oct. 11 and 12), we thought it would be a good idea to catch up with some of the animation producing companies which will be attending the event in France. Here are some at-a-glance information bytes about the brand-new toons they're bringing to the global mart:

BRB Internacional

New Show: *The Secret Life of Suckers*

Format: 104 x 2-minute, High-Def CG

Target Audience: The whole family

Created By: "It was a great idea the director Juanma Sanchez introduced to us, and we've been working together with him since the end of 2007," says Carlos Biern, BRB's ebullient head of co-productions and new technologies.

Produced By: Screen 21, Genoma Animation and Televisió de Catalunya. "All the CG production will be done in Spain between Barcelona and Granada, two of the most beautiful and artistic cities in Southern Europe," notes Biern.

What's It About: "Everybody has tons of toys inside their cars, especially in big cities, so we thought it was about time we told audiences for the first time about their secret life and how they feel about us!"

Stand-Out Qualities: "It is inspired by art toys (plush toys), hip-hop and silent comedy. It is sooo contemporarily urban and wacky! I already want to own all the Suckers for my own car!" says Biern.

On Market Trends: "Probably the big changes on majors and over French TV funding made in 2007 won't affect all of us as much as how the videogames and the online experience is starting to develop interactive stories and revenues. I think buyers are looking for silent comedies. Boys' action demand will come again very soon."



Nelvana Enterprises

New Show: *Scaredy Squirrel*

Format: 26 half-hours and companion shorts, digital 2D

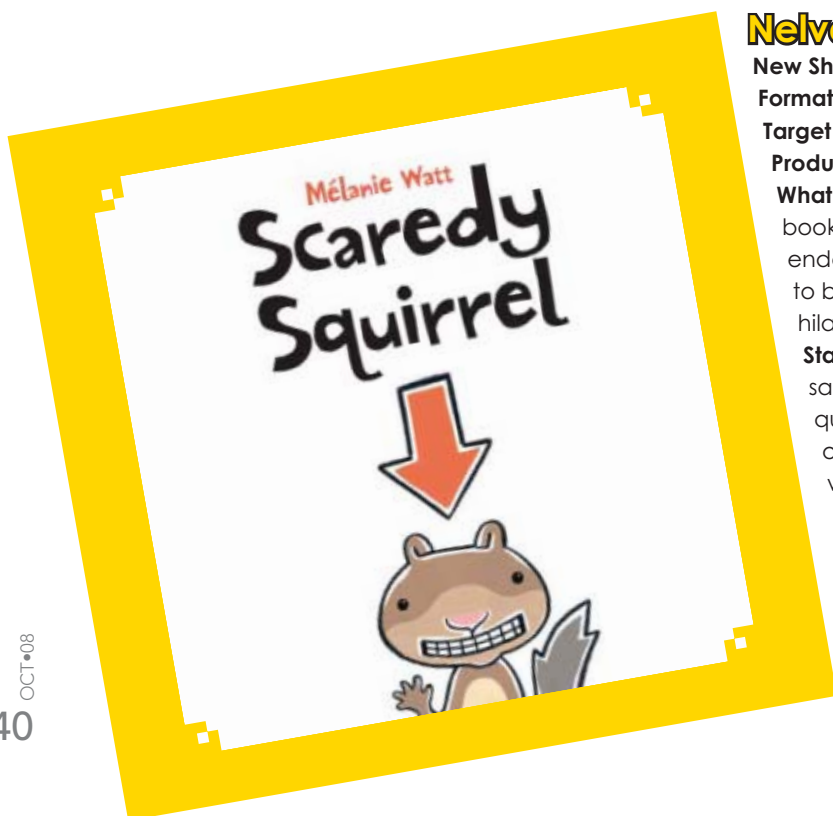
Target Audience: Family

Produced By: Nelvana Studios

What's It About: *Scaredy Squirrel* is based on a popular book series by Canadian author Mélanie Watt, featuring an endearingly obsessive-compulsive hero—instantly relatable to both young and old—who will cheer on Scaredy in his hilarious attempts to be brave.

Stand-Out Qualities: As Lynn Chadwick, VP of worldwide sales and distribution for Nelvana, tells us, "Scaredy is a quirky and unlikely agoraphobic hero who is scared of the most ridiculous things, such as avocados and walruses. His phobias are ludicrous, yet we laugh with him (not at him) as he attempts to lead a 'normal life,' just like all of us."

On Market Trends: "There is still great interest in live-action rivals to *Hannah Montana* and kids' reality shows," says Chadwick. "Comedy is still a big priority but content is still 'king.' It's always important to have good stories with credible characters that kids can identify with."



The Jim Henson Company

New Show: *Dinosaur Train*

Format: 26 x 30, CG

Target Audience: Preschool

Created By: Craig Bartlett (*Hey Arnold!*)

What's It About: Buddy, a preschool-age Tyrannosaurus Rex, tries to make sense of the world and his adopted family, the Pteranodons. Our young hero wants to learn more about himself and other dinosaur species, so Mrs. Pteranodon takes him on a ride on the Dino Train—a colorful steam engine that has the ability to carry all kinds of dinosaurs to all the prehistoric eras!

Stand-Out Qualities: Based on input from paleontologists, science educators and early childhood education experts, *Dinosaur Train* has developed an ambitious, creative curriculum. Harnessing children's enthusiasm for and curiosity about dinosaurs, *Dinosaur Train* hopes to spark three- to six-year-old children's interest in life science and natural history. The show encourages children to compare the characteristics of ancient animals with those that are alive today.

Sales Pitch: Sam Ewing, Henson's recently appointed international sales exec, notes, "*Dinosaur Train* offers tremendous creativity and a level of quality that broadcasters around the world have long associated with The Jim Henson Company, and we are extremely proud to present this new series to the international television marketplace at MIPCOM."

On Market Trends: "Comedy continues to be appealing; character comedy in particular, because the audience identifies with characters who not only reflect similar attributes, but also face situations/conflicts with which the audience is familiar."



TELEVISION

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Cosgrove Hall

New Show: *Squidge and the Hardnuts*

Format: 104 x 5, in a combo of CG, 2D, Flash and stop-motion

Target Audience: Preschool

Budget (estimated): \$7.5 million (£ 4 million U.K.)

What's It About: *Squidge and the Hardnuts* is a fun, fast-paced squash and stretch comedy series that celebrates difference, tolerance and understanding. The show follows the comic adventures of Squidge and his best friend, Splat: Two soft and squidgy round kids who are bounced through space onto Planet Hard when their own planet, Splodge, is hit by a wobblequake! The stories and humor of the series are driven by the contrast and differences Squidge and Splat find all around them on Planet Hard.

Stand-Out Qualities: "By combining CGI with traditional puppet animation, we've produced an innovative series with worldwide appeal for the 21st century that celebrates difference, tolerance and understanding," notes Francis Vose,

Cosgrove Hall Films' creative director. "The series focuses on everyday subjects that children encounter in their daily lives, and the stories are told in a fun and imaginative way. The Hardnut world is a familiar setting for any child as it is set out on a children's play mat and the characters handle issues that children are familiar with and the stories are told entirely from the child's perspective. These gentle life lessons are communicated with lots of humor and enable children to understand that it's OK to be different."

Cuppa Coffee Studios

New Show: *Nerland*

Format: 20 x 22, stop-motion

Target Audience: Teen

Co-Produced By: TELETOON Canada

Budget (estimated): \$365,000 per episode

What's It About: *Nerland* is a stop-motion series featuring the twisted misadventures of a group of pop-culture obsessed nerds as they try to survive in a decidedly nerd-unfriendly society. It's a teen slacker comedy that draws upon elements of fantasy and satire to poke fun at the inner nerd lurking in the cluttered basements of our minds!

Stand-Out Qualities: According to Cuppa Coffee president Adam Shaheen, "It's the fact that it's a highly stylized stop-motion series shot on High Def which supports an extremely well-crafted comedy script."

On Market Trends: "We're seeing a continued trend in derivative work. Cuppa Coffee Studios sets the bar at producing original ideas with original style."



OCT•08

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TV-Loonland

New Show: *Leon*

Format: 52 x 3, CG

Target Audience: All ages, "but not so much fun if you're a springbok"

Co-Produced By: France 3 / Studio Hari

Created By: Alexandre So, Antoine Rodelet and Josselin Charier

What's It About: The creators of *The Owl* have come up with a new slapstick hero—a not-so-ferocious lion who is constantly outsmarted by his prey. Each episode brings a new encounter, be it with a dippy springbok, hysterical hyenas or even a love-struck hippo ... But in Leon's world, the chase always spirals out of control and the poor lion often goes hungry! Inspired by the all time animation classics, *Leon* is a true celebration of slapstick and squash and stretch genius ... This is an animal kingdom never seen in documentaries!

Stand-Out Qualities: "The creators of *The Owl* have outdone themselves in the making of *Leon*," says Justine Bannister, TV-Loonland's head of distribution and acquisition. "The combination of a rather unusual lion roaming a stunning Savannah backdrop, animated slapstick genius and brilliant comic timing make the show truly unique."

On Market Trends: The TV-Loonland team gave us the following tidbits: "Buyers are constantly looking for series that are funny, fast-paced and intelligently written—there's always a demand for strong boys' action and comedy-action. It helps to have educational but fun content—social skills and social awareness themes are a plus. Another prerequisite is being in tune with technology—whereby kids have direct interaction/participation with the show's online/games/tours. Some broadcasters are now creating blocks/slots for short-form programs. Buyers don't like to see copycats, animals dressed as humans and behaving like humans, gratuitous violence and gushing blood!"



Breakthrough Entertainment

New Show: *Fishtronaut*

Format: 26 x 30, 2D Flash (available in HD)

Target Audience: Four- to seven-year olds

Created By: Celia Catunda and Kiko Mistrorigo

Co-Produced By: TV PinGuin in association with Discovery Kids

What's It About: A fun-filled animated adventure series following Fishtronaut, a secret agent, as he explores the world's many mysteries above and below water. Kids are encouraged to engage interactively by tapping and clapping along with Fishtronaut and his friends.

Stand-Out Qualities: Nat Abraham, head of sales and acquisitions at Breakthrough, tells us, "In *Fishtronaut*, kids are encouraged to engage interactively by

tapping and clapping along with Fishtronaut and his friends, Marina and Zeek. We think kids will enjoy watching *Fishtronaut* and clapping

along to help him solve mysteries and put together clues to help animals and the environment.

Kids will also enjoy exploring the jungle and listening to the rhythm and beats of the music."

On Market Trends: "We are seeing new programs that address environmental concerns, especially those targeting kids and young people. *Fishtronaut* is a perfect example. The series offers catchy songs and games, while teaching kids that it's fun to be environmentally conscious."

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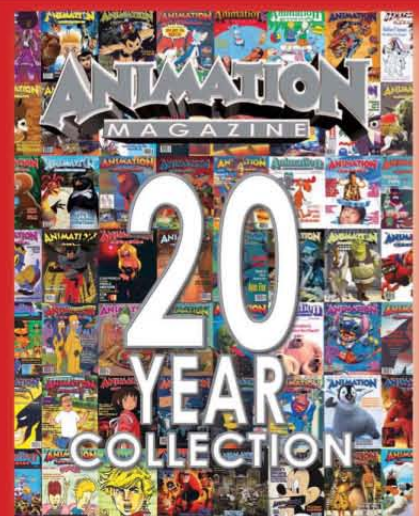
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Junior Snapshots

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VIZ Media Europe

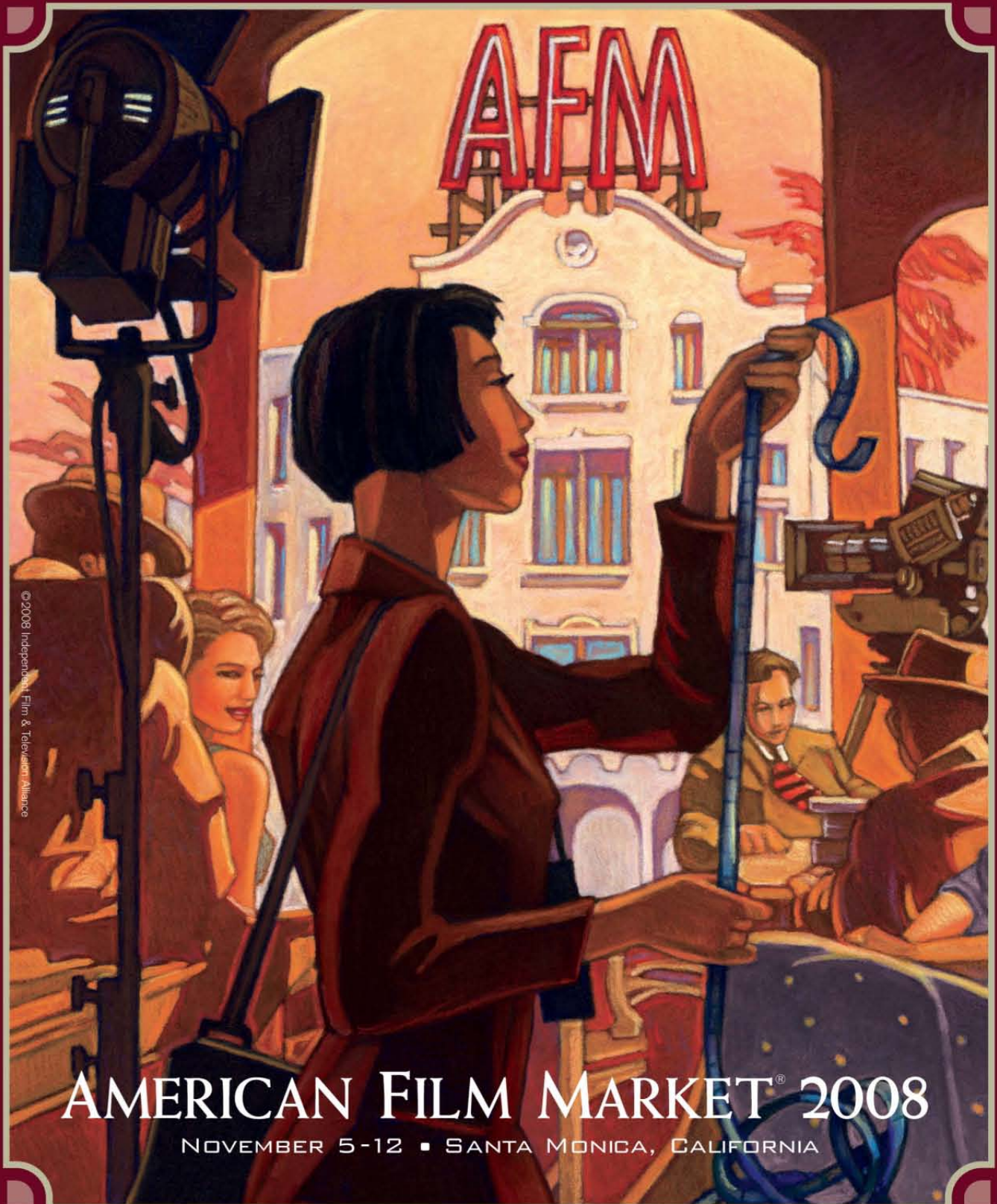
New Show: *Blue Dragon***Format:** 51 x 30, 2D anime**Target Audience:** Six- to 11-year-olds**Produced By:** Studio Pierrot**Created By:** Based on the Microsoft Xbox 360 game by Hironobu Sakaguchi (creator of *Final Fantasy*), featuring character designs by Akira Toriyama (creator of the *Dragon Ball* series).**What's It About:** This classic adventure story of magical Shadow powers, flying air fortresses, and unbounded heroism follows seven Soldiers of Light who must awaken the Shadow within to overcome a despotic power and bring peace to their land. Their ensuing journey through a rich fantasy world is also an internal journey to awaken the great power within each of them.**Stand-Out Qualities:** "*Blue Dragon* represents the latest convergence of videogaming and anime. It fuses the genius of Akira Toriyama and Hironobu Sakaguchi, with a beautiful story and incredibly rich animation," says Bill Germain, director of TV production sales and music at VIZ. "The show has a universal appeal and has sold in the U.S., Canada and Europe as well as Australia and New Zealand."**On Market Trends:** "We see the trend continuing along the path of action/comedy for young boys. The action seen in *Blue Dragon* answers the continued demand for fun-filled fantasy adventure. We are seeing the growth of our high teen to adult market for animation continue to grow. Within the realm of 'Boys' Action', *Naruto* is still a dominant force, and for teens VIZ Media's *Bleach* has been wildly successful."

FitzRoy Media

New Show: *Funny Face***Co-Produced By:** Renegade Animation, Brady Enterprises**Format:** 25 x 1**Target Audience:** Tween/teen**Back Story:** The Funny Face characters were originally introduced via packets of a drink mix introduced by Pillsbury in 1964 as a challenger to Kool-Aid. The character's silly faces made them popular with school-age kids.**What's It About:** When eight disparate fruits are catapulted from the back of a produce truck, they must band together to survive the perils of the side of the road. In the process, they make one nutty fruit salad. The show harkens back to the day when

cartoons just had to be funny and a watermelon could get hit by a speeding car and live to joke about it.

Stand-Out Qualities: As sales director Hamp Hampton points out, "The zany characters have enough comedy that it can transcend age demographics—kids to adults. Since the baby boomers saw the original characters as kids, then see the comedy routines now in a new form, they will easily relate to them. For the kids now, they are zany fruit characters much like the M&M characters that have been so popular for kids." ■



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On Your Marks, Get Set, Begin Sniffing!

Every CG-animated pooch has his/her day in the new Scholastic/CCI series, *Turbo Dogs*.

Dogs and racing have gone paw in paw since the first Iditarod sled dog race took place in 1967. This fall, kids will get to meet a new kind of racing canines when Scholastic and CCI unleash their new CG-animated series, *Turbo Dogs*. These pooches are into extreme racing and don't need a human driver to make them go the extra mile. Based on a popular children's book by author/illustrator Bob Kolar, the show will wag its tail on the qubo lineup (on ION Television, Saturday mornings on NBC and weekday mornings in Spanish on Telemundo) and on the CBC in Canada.

"We are always looking for things that can introduce a new concept to children's television," notes Deborah Forte, CEO of Scholastic Enterprises. "We came upon Bob's book [titled *Racer Dogs*] and knew that we could do wonderful things in terms of action and storytelling and build the show upon themes that we're very interested in—cooperation, community and teamwork."

The look of the show is a departure from the art featured in the book, as the producers decided to create a CG property. Forte says, "The book's original art is traditional and flat, and we knew that since the show centers on dogs and racing,

we were going to have lots of action. It's the kind of action that can be best depicted in CG. It also allowed us to grow in a new direction."

Scholastic teamed up with CCI Entertainment, the Canadian studio behind toons such as *Erky Perky* and *Harry and His Bucket Full of Dinosaurs*, and New Zealand's Huhu Studios to produce the 52 x 11 or 26 x 22 package. "One of the first CG-animated series we worked on was *Monster by Mistake*," says Arnie Zipursky, co-chair and CEO of CCI. "For us, it was really important to capture the warmth of these characters in CG. *Turbo Dogs* is targeting a young age group, and we really wanted kids to connect with the characters emotionally."

Zipursky and his Toronto-based team began looking at designs in June of 2007, and because qubo and the CBC were ready to roll with the show in the fall of 2008, they were under a very tight production schedule to follow. "Nobody wanted to lower the bar," he says. "These are expensive shows to make and we had a huge time crunch on this project. We're animating the show using Maya, with Nuke and After Effects for rendering."

Both Zipursky and Forte mention that although the show is aimed at the four- to six-year-old target audi-

ence, it has the potential to skew older and to appeal to both boys and girls. The six main canine characters—Dash (the selfless competitor), GT (the natural-born mechanic), Mags (the not-so-girlie poodle), Strut (the dachshund who is always looking for shortcuts), Stinkbert (a pooch who likes rolling around in the garbage dump a little too much) and Clutch (the klutzy dog with a heart of gold)—offer plenty of exciting storylines and reasons to tune in week after week.

"I think it's a lot of fun to have a show that has humor and heart, and its world is a metaphor for life," adds Forte, whose company is also producing the hit animated PBS series *WordGirl*. "In addition, we have lots of physical humor and you can really do a lot with physical humor in animation for kids."

Regardless of the style of animation, Forte believes that good storytelling will always win over audiences. "Wonderful concepts like *SpongeBob* and *Clifford* are evergreen. We are seeing this trend for animating in CG, but I think the content of the project should dictate the style of animation, not vice versa. Look at *WordGirl*, for example: It's done in basic Flash [by Boston's Soup2Nuts], and the animation works perfectly for that concept. There's no reason to do that show in 3D."

Zipursky, however, says that one of the major issues facing animation producers is the dwindling number of slots available for toons on TV. "This year, for example, we're seeing less demand for animation from YTV in Canada," he notes. Perhaps that's why CCI and other similar companies are expanding their online activities for their latest projects. This month, CCI Digital is launching a sophisticated online *Turbo Dogs* game which uses GPS technology to follow the dogs on their many adventures. "Kids can log on and use these applications to race to another location, get trading cards, find hidden bones, get credits, etc.," says Zipursky. "Creating these online components to our shows has become very important for our business. You have to offer a lot more online. It has to be more of an extension of the property, and the kids have to get to love it to get involved with the characters beyond the TV series." In other words, unleash the dogs on every platform, and watch as fans race along with them to the ends of the world, fingers crossed! ■

***Turbo Dogs* premieres on qubo on October 3.**



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The Shape of Toons to Come

European animation studios present 60 animated show ideas at the 19th edition of Cartoon Forum in Ludwigsburg.

Like charming sidewalk cafes and long summer vacations, the annual Cartoon Forum event is one of those sublime European concepts that's been envied by Americans for years. The 19th edition of the animated TV co-production confab takes place in the historic city of Ludwigsburg in Germany (Sept. 16-19) and will offer 360 hours of animation with over 700 industry professionals in attendance.

Under the guidance of general director Marc Vandeweyer and manager Annick Maes, the Forum has continued to show signs of growth with each passing year, and this year is no exception. The four-day event will present 60 projects from 14 countries to broadcasters, investors and co-producers

from across Europe. "We're seeing series in 2D conceived also for new distribution platforms such as mobile phone, Internet and videogames," notes Vandeweyer. "Shows targeting children six to nine years of age remain the most popular audience in these proposed series."

The Forum's pan-European flavor is dominated by French studios, which are presenting a whopping 15 of the 60 pitches, followed closely by Germans with 11 and Brits with 10 projects. Many of the shows presented at the Forum will also be shopping for buyers and funding money at the MIPCOM market in October.

Cute and cuddly critters, feisty pint-size heroes and goofy little monsters take center stage as the presenters show clips and illustrations of their proposed shows.

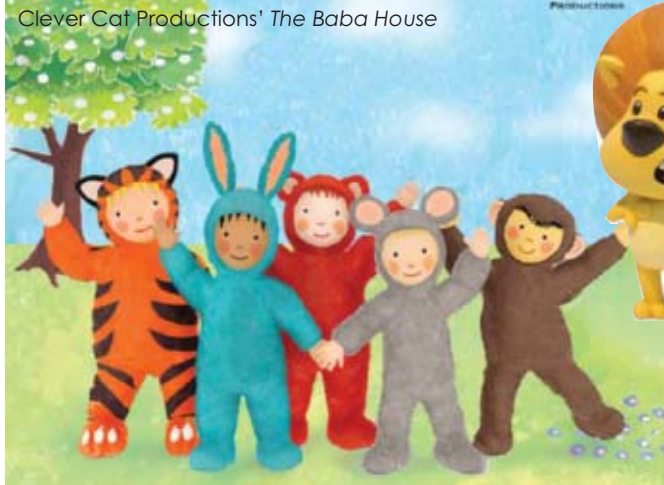
Calon's *Abercadabra* (U.K.), Studio Baestarts' *Huhu* (Hungary), Les Armateurs' *Marline* (France), Studio 88 GmbH's *Marvelous Adventures in the Insect Kingdom* (Germany), Millimages' *Mouk's World Tour* (France), Imira Entertainment's *Myo & Ga* (Spain), Alphanim/Vivement Lundi's *Pok & Mok* (France), Nordisk Film Prod.'s *Rocky* (Sweden), A.Film's *Toff Igelkott* (Denmark), Il Luster Prod.'s *The Tumbles* (Netherlands) and Mackinnon & Saunders' *Rah Rah!* are some of the interesting new toons competing for producers' coin at the Forum this year. Among the contenders that may need new English titles or have some difficulty crossing cultural barriers: *Paper Bag Lady*, *Paper Clips and Nail Polish*, *Plankton Invasion*, *Sturmtruppen* and *D.E.A.D!*

Also on the agenda this year is a special screening of the five finalists for the annual Cartoon d'Or award which is given to animated shorts that have made the festival rounds. Vincent Bierrewaerts for *The Bridge* (Belgium/France), Arnaud Demuynck for *Breakout* (Belgium), Pierre-Luc Granjon for *The White Wolf* (France), Benjamin Renner for *A Mouse's Tale* (France) and Matthew Walker for *John and Karen* (U.K.) are the lucky nominees for 2008. ■

—Ramin Zahed

For more event info, visit
www.cartoon-media-be/forum.

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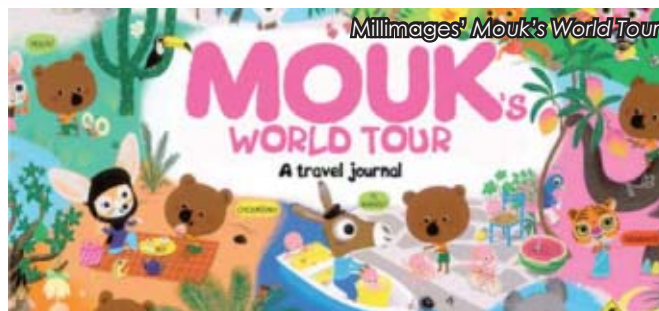
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A Loveable Ham!

Olivia, Ian Falconer's imaginative pig, gets her own CG-animated series thanks to Chorion, Nick Jr. and Brown Bag.

Porky Pig, Piglet and Babe better watch out; there's a new animated pig in town!

Based on the award-winning children's book series by Ian Falconer, which was first introduced eight years ago, *Olivia* centers on a strong-willed and quite imaginative 6 ¾-year-old pig who has a way of mixing her daily life with flights of fancy. Produced by Chorion and commissioned by Nick Jr., the 52 x 11 series debuts on U.K. channel Five's Milkshake block this fall and will arrive on Nick in the spring of '09. The show is exec produced by Chorion's Diana Manson and Pat Resnick.

According to Chorion Silver Lining's director of creative Megan Laughton, it took the producers about two years before they decided to go to Ireland's Brown Bag Films to develop the CG animation for the show. "Our primary concern was to get the visuals right first and then we knew the story could follow," says Laughton. She says it was Falconer's instinct to do the show in 3D. "As a professional set and costume designer for theatre and opera,

he came to the notion of constructing a 3D world of sets, props and costumes for Olivia naturally. It was our concern to get the models right and moving well and to find an overall visual style that echoed Ian's collage approach in the books (drawings, photos etc.) and have it feel as integrated and fresh as it does in the books."

One of the team's central goals was to keep Olivia as expressive, elegant and dexterous as the creator's original drawings. "We felt that if she could move well we'd be able to capture much of her character and comedy from the books and build out from there," says Laughton. "We also needed to tackle the

challenge on the narrative side: How do we gently expand the existing characters, add new ones and create stories with elements of sophistication that a preschool audience will understand and enjoy?"

Using 3ds Max to animate the character, the team at Brown Bag developed its own custom auto rigging tool, (cleverly referred to as the "Pig Rig") to meet the challenge of creating a large

number of characters in short order for the show. Laughton says the tool helped reduce the rigging time of a complete character from one week to under a day. "The 'Pig Rig' also had inbuilt tools to load and save anima-

tion files so that the animation could be re-loaded from one character to another with ease," she adds. The textures and backgrounds were digitally painted using Photoshop, Deep Paint and some Z-brush. To push the painted look of the series, all the sets had pre-baked painted lighting on them, which meant only props and characters required additional lighting. This method also saved render time since final frames were rendered in High Def.

The series is directed by Darragh O'Connell, Brown Bag's co-founder, who was nominated for an Oscar in 2001 for his short *Give Up Yer Aul Sins* along with Cathal Gaffney. "He is involved in all aspects of the show from the script to the final mix," adds Laughton. "We literally scouted the world for up-and-coming creative companies. Brown Bag had never done a series but [CBeebies controller] Michael Carrington's enthusiasm for them and recommendation was a big plus for us."

Obviously, 2008 hasn't been an easy year for producers who are looking to launch a new property on the jam-packed cable and TV landscape. But Laughton believes that the solution is to think creatively about how things can be achieved in a constrained environment and to experiment boldly to deliver shows with distinctive content and visuals.

Laughton also believes that Olivia's dynamic personality and her visually stunning world will give young girls a lot of reasons to tune in week after week. "Aside from Olivia herself being absolutely irresistible, the world she lives in and imagines herself in looks like no other show out there," she says. "The richness and saturated colors of her fantasies are nothing short of feature quality for the small screen ... Olivia is today's girl. She's energetic, curious, bold, imaginative and she believes anything is possible." Who knows—maybe they'll even get Miss Piggy to do a guest spot as a self-absorbed distant relative! ■



Megan Laughton



Olivia premieres this fall on U.K. Five's Milkshake block. It will debut on Nick in early 2009. For more info, visit www.oliviathepiglet.com.



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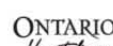
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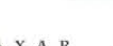


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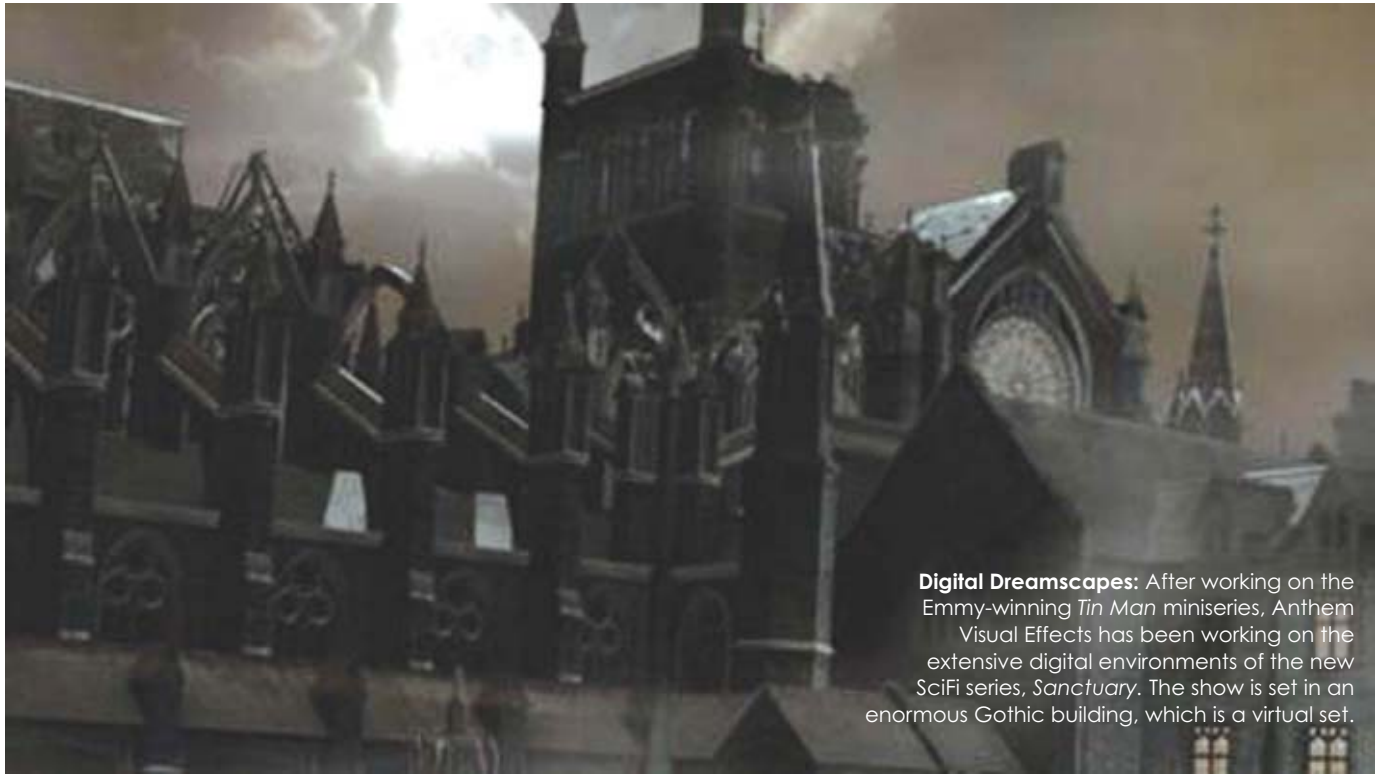


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Digital Dreamscapes: After working on the Emmy-winning *Tin Man* miniseries, Anthem Visual Effects has been working on the extensive digital environments of the new SciFi series, *Sanctuary*. The show is set in an enormous Gothic building, which is a virtual set.

A Supernatural Shelter Shapes Up

Anthem uses green-screen technology and the RED ONE digital camera to bring the features and locations of SciFi Channel's *Sanctuary* to vivid life.

by Barbara Robertson

The immortal, monster-hunting Dr. Helen Magnus first brought the *Sanctuary* to life in a series of eight webisodes developed by the SciFi Channel that debuted on the Internet in May 2007. In October 2008, the 157-year-old doctor (played by Amanda Tapping of *Stargate* fame), her daughter Ashley (Emilie Ullerup), Ashley's father John Druitt (Christopher Heyerdahl)—a.k.a. Jack the Ripper—and Dr. Will Zimmerman (Robin Dunne) move onto SciFi's official cable channel.

The two-hour pilot for the new TV series introduces audiences to the work of Dr. Magnus, one of the first female doctors in London's Royal College during the Victorian era. Unable to break through the physicians' glass ceiling, the brilliant doctor turned to her famous father for instruction, and he, in turn, introduced her to his sanc-

tuary for supernatural creatures.

Thus, during the past century and a half, the good doctor has continued her father's studies by tracking, rescuing and capturing good and evil "abnormals" for protection and research in her Sanctuary. She believes these creatures—some frightful, some beautiful—hold the key to human evolution; and she protects the public from the dangerous ones.

Vancouver-based Anthem Visual Effects, which recently created some 1,500 visual effects shots for the Emmy-award winning mini-series *Tin Man*, is handling the digital environments and creatures for *Sanctuary*'s 13-episode series, filmed, as were the webisodes, largely on green-screen stages.

"Obviously, if we have a couple characters sitting in an office for three pages of

dialog, there's no reason to do that virtually," says Lee Wilson, co-producer and visual effects supervisor. "But, about 70 percent of the show is being shot on green-screens, so it's not what is an effect in the show, it's what's not an effect. There are hundreds and hundreds of visual effects."

Further, to make the work more interesting for the studio, the series is the first to use the new 4K-resolution RED ONE digital camera exclusively, according to Wilson.

"We have a six-day schedule for shooting," says Wilson, "So, as soon as we deliver the first show, they need another one right after. We're working on all the shows at the same time to a certain extent." For the pilot, the studio had 17 weeks to prepare, and many of the environments created for that episode appear in future episodes.

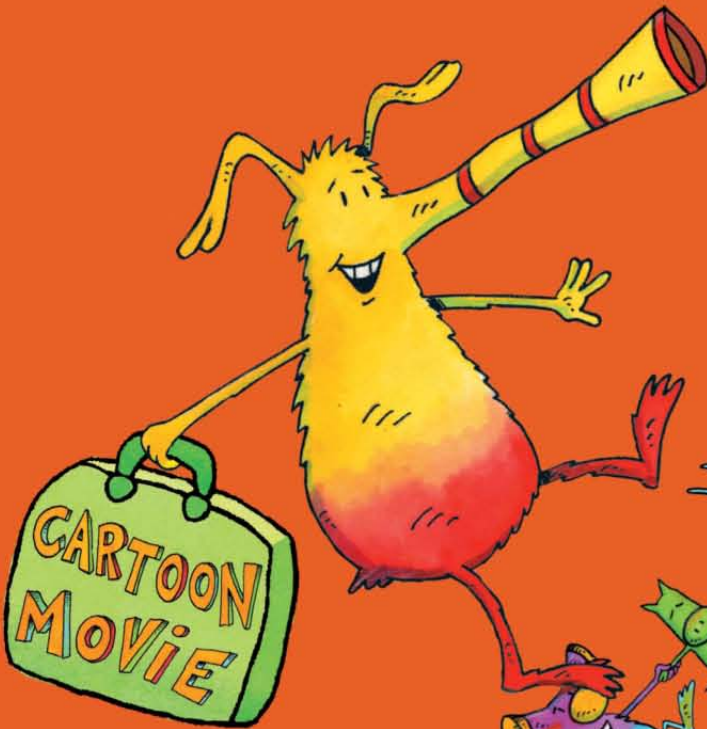
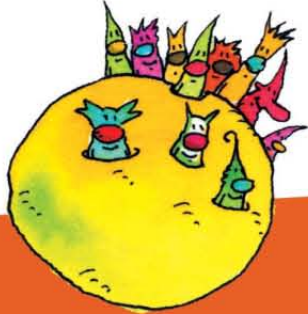
Because the major location for the show is the green-screen stage, the writers could imagine the action happening anywhere in the world, and did. "We can put [the characters] on a street in a city halfway around the world, a mountain in Tibet or a beach in Hawaii," Wilson says.

Much of the time, though, the actors are in the Sanctuary, an enormous building complete with a multi-tiered laboratory that is always a virtual set, as is most of the

continued on page 54

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Sanctuary

continued from page 52

building. In general, with the exception of the library's practical set, if an actor doesn't have to touch something, it's usually CG.

To help make these high-resolution digital backgrounds possible to create in such a short shooting schedule, anything the actors interact with in the environment is practical. "Otherwise, we'd be faking my death in a fiery car crash," Wilson laughs. For example, when a character needs to turn on a light switch, the actor on the green-screen stage flips a switch attached to a pole. And if a creature is digital, green-suited stand-ins act together with the actors.

The creatures—mythological, historical and often strange—are sometimes digital, sometimes actors wearing prosthetic makeup and sometimes a combination of both. "Generally, if a full-blown creature has to walk, move around and play in scenes, they end up being CG," Wilson says. "There's always something new, and sometimes we have two or three creatures in an episode."

Wilson predicts we'll see predatory-type animals and little creatures that aren't what they seem, quadrupeds, strange beings with their own methods of locomotion, canine-like creatures the size of a bear, serpents and more. "They're always bringing forth new discoveries, so it's pretty ambitious," he says.

The creatures and some of the buildings and digital sets are full 3D rendered geometry, but some environments are matte paintings, both flat matte paintings and 2.5D projections. "If the camera is flying into the city from only one direction, we use projection-mapped paintings on geometry to cut down on rendering time," Wilson says. "We evaluate whether something is a major build that we're coming back to and can amortize or not." Among the major builds are the Sanctuary exteriors, a seminary church structure, the multiple floors of the lab, an infirmary and a parapet atop the seminary with a view of the city. But the crew also creates one-off locations for particular episodes.

Artists at Anthem working in Maya and Shake on Macintoshes provided preliminary "builds" of the virtual environments for the actors to help them understand where they are, and the actors and post



crew also had concept art. "No one is surprised to find out they're at the Brooklyn Zoo," Wilson says.

However, the environments can change

we can have them exit through a different doorway," Wilson says. "And, we don't want them turning into walls, so we move the walls if we have to."

Although Wilson works closely with the director and production designer, they rarely know exactly what an episode will look like until they see the final shots. "Because we have such an intense delivery schedule and because of the number of effects moving simultaneously through the pipeline at the same level of completion for every shot in a scene, we don't pull individual shots," Wilson says. "We have a lot of temp stuff in the cuts and a lot of green-screen until the shots all come out the other side, and then it's, 'Oh, that changes everything.'"

With 1,000 visual effects shots in the first four episodes alone,

such optimization is critical. "The volume of effects is unheard of in a weekly series," Wilson says. "There really isn't anything like it on television." ■

"... About 70 percent of the show is being shot on green-screens, so it's not what is an effect in the show, it's what's not an effect. There are hundreds and hundreds of visual effects."

— Lee Wilson, *Sanctuary's* co-producer and visual effects supervisor



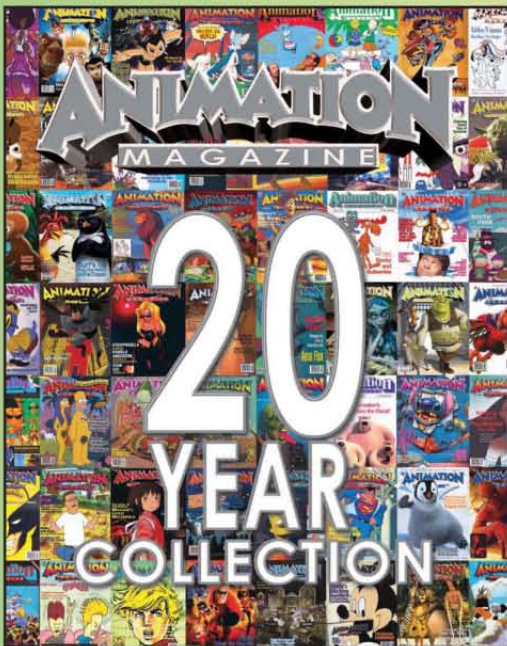
once the footage moves into post-production. "We didn't move the actors from a mountain to a submarine, but if our characters are walking through the lab,

Sanctuary premieres on The SciFi Channel at 9 p.m. on Oct. 3. You can learn more about Vancouver's Anthem at www.anthemfx.com.

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Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Side Effects' Houdini 9.5

Last month, we caught up with many new versions of familiar software at the SIGGRAPH confab in Los Angeles. One of these midsummer arrivals was the 9.5 version of Side Effects' Houdini, which was recently used by Rhythm & Hues in *The Incredible Hulk* movie. Founded in 1987, the folks at Side Effects Software have been around for a while now and were growing up with Softimage and Alias back when Houdini used to be called PRISMS. But instead of growing old and getting settled in their ways, they continue to stay smart as hell and exuberant about life (think Val Kilmer in the movie *Real Genius*). I mean, I only covered the latest features of Houdini three months ago! While I was writing that review, they came out with a point release. So now we have Version 9.5 with which to acquaint ourselves.

The biggest hot item about 9.5 is that it's available for Mac OSX 11 working under 64-bit Leopard, which brings Apple even closer to

"Fire Transfer" by Jake Fullerton © 2008



being fully production ready. That comment will surely bring the wrath of Macophiles everywhere—but just try and use Maya on a Mac versus a PC or Linux box and then come talk to me (as you wait for Maya to restart after crashing). The remaining features of the product are really a whole laundry list of items that is covered in detail in the newly rewritten and improved documentation. You

can import Illustrator and FBX files, and export to Quicktime and Illustrator. Fracture and Debris tools are improved. There are also easy tools for making whitecaps on waves and sculpting particle flow in the River Simulation tool. You also get improved smoke and fire effects in a program that is already at the top of its class for vfx work as well as adaptive and animated level-set solvers. The list goes on and on. Sure, the big houses use it, but the small shops use it, too. What's amazing is that the development wizards at Side Effects continue to maintain the energy of a Jack Russell Terrier as it rips apart your shoe.

Website: www.sidefx.com

Price: Houdini Escape Workstation: \$1,995; Master Workstation: \$7,999; Houdini Escape Network: \$2,995; Master Network: \$9,995; Houdini Escape Batch: \$1,485; Houdini Apprentice HD: \$99; Houdini Apprentice Download: Free



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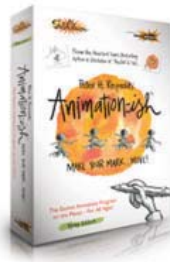
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Toon Boom's Animation-ish & Wacom's Bamboo Tablet

My buddies at Wacom, who have released a "consumer-level" tablet they affectionately call Bamboo, were unsure whether *Animation Magazine* readers would be interested in reviewing the new Toon Boom software known as Animation-ish—a product that wasn't aimed directly at professional animators. However, I was adamant: I was a junior in high school when the first issue of *Animation* made its debut. I didn't have access to Oxberry animation stands, 16mm Bolex cameras or extra cash to spend on animation paper. But still, I went to the comic-book store and purchased every issue, gleaning every bit of information, technique and fact. This magazine isn't just a resource for those of us who work in the industry, but also for the upcoming generations who dream to be where we are ... Those who draw stick figures their textbooks, mold dinosaurs out of Sculpy or have been blessed with a computer and the ingenuity to have downloaded the Personal



Learning Edition of Maya.

The low-cost Bamboo tablet gives access to the artist who may not have the resources to drop \$1,500 on a Cintiq. The Bamboo—a sleek black model with both pen and mouse—responds like its siblings. Lightweight and small, it's terrific for traveling or less than ideal desk space. There are controls for scrolling and zooming in windows as well as customizable function buttons. (You can even touch up digital photos, draw by hand, create artwork and write e-mail in your own handwriting with the Bamboo Fun edition, as the package includes Adobe Photoshop Elements, Corel Painter Essentials and Nik Color Efex Pro.)

So, for the purposes of this review, I coupled Bamboo with Animation-ish, which is the brainchild of best-selling author and artist, Peter H. Reynolds and powered by the leader of 2D paperless animation, Toon Boom. I didn't have high expectations, just because it was pitched to me as a children's educational tool. And it is—but it is so delightful to work in, that I was quickly



won over by its charm. Some developers could learn a few things from Animation-ish's perfect interface design. I mean, I totally want a little animated monster biting every time I clicked on the

Undo button in my Maya interface.

The approach is wonderfully easy to use. It starts from drawing in Wiggledoodle-ish (allowing users to get a hold on how animation is a sequence of images), advancing to Flipbook-ish (extending the concept into longer sequences). The final step is Advanced-ish, which has abilities to set keys, transform art, set layers of foreground and background and pull from a library of prepared artwork. It's simple, effective and straightforward. The playful look of the toon created with Animation-ish resembles the works of Richard Scarry, Bill Plympton and Don Hertzfeldt. If I had access to this wonderful package as a kid ... Man, I would probably be Ruler of the Universe-ish.

Website: www.toonboom.com

Price: Animation-ish, \$59.95

Website: www.wacom.com/Bambootablet

Price: Bamboo Tablet, \$79; Bamboo Fun, \$99 ■



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Paramount, Omnitoons Make Mobile Comics

We can already hear the jokes about Tom Cruise being a comic-book character, but it was recently announced that the **Mission: Impossible** franchise and several upcoming Paramount films including the thriller *Eagle Eye* and the Brit comedy *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* have inspired new mobile comics. **Paramount Digital Entertainment** has teamed with Singapore-based animation house **Omnitoons** to produce the manga-style series designed to help market the films. The comics are now available in MMS and J2ME formats in the U.S., Australia, Europe and India. They will also be

made available for download through various carriers and content distributors around the world. Though Paramount is using them as promotional tools, the carriers apparently see them as premium content and will assign charges for users.

Digital comics have become a popular tool for studios exploring new ways of building excitement for their filmed entertainment product. Warner Bros. recently launched Warner Premiere's

Motion Comics with the debut of DC Comics' *Watchmen*, which is available in the iTunes Store and is helping to promote the May 6, 2009 release of the live-action feature. The new imprint also put out a digital version of the Eisner Award-winning graphic novel *Batman: Mad Love* to coincide with the release of the blockbuster *The Dark Knight*.

Blu-ray Best-Sellers

1. Iron Man (Paramount)
2. Transformers (Paramount)
3. The Nightmare Before Christmas (Disney)
4. Heroes: Season 2 (Universal)
5. Batman Begins (Warner Bros.)
6. V for Vendetta (Warner Bros.)
7. Twister (Warner Bros.)
8. Planet Earth (BBC)
9. Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles (Fox)
10. Heroes: Season 1 (Universal)

Source: amazon.com 8/28/08

WALL•E Plugs in to New Desktop

Computer-savvy kids and Pixar fans alike will be all over Hyperdesk's latest **Wall•E Hypersuite**, a package that allows kids and fans of all ages to customize their computers with a Windows theme, custom icons, dynamic widgets and other features based on the latest hit animated feature from Disney and Pixar.

The WALL•E Hypersuite features two stylized hyperthemes featuring WALL•E and EVE (and two variant editions), two sets of desktop icons, wallpapers featuring scenes from the movie and new artwork, a Windows Media Player 11 video skin for each style and a hybrid audio remote widget that controls both iTunes and Windows Media Player 11. In addition, the WALL•E Windows XP desktop theme from The Skins Factory brings more of the movie's fun to Windows XP desktops. The package is now available for \$14.95 at www.Hyperdesk.com. Users will need to download the free Yahoo! Widgets application to use the audio remote.



Swimming in Techno Fluids



It's hard to keep up with the talented Gondry brothers. While Michel has continued his eccentric cinematic journey with films such as *Be Kind, Rewind* and *Tokyo* this year, his older brother Olivier has been directing some great-looking commercials. His latest effort is the **Speaker Birth** spot for the W980 Walkman in which a young

man swims through an aural amniotic bath. Created by McCann Erickson, the spot showcases great visuals from U.K. vfx shop **Framestore CFC**.

According to vfx supervisor Jonathan Hairman, the team used morphed and blended sub-aqua and studio shots of the actor's face, to create the impression of someone floating in a peculiar element. "The location was deliberately ambiguous," Hairman says, "We didn't want to define it too rigidly. In the same way, the 3D elements created for this section were designed to give the impression of being light rays. Diarmid Harrison-Murray and his team used a combination of fluid simulations and cloth simulations, with various shaders on them to get the effect of 'fingers of light' reaching out to our hero like fingers or tendrils, organic but not too specific. It's about mood as much as anything." The ethereal results float way above the rest.

Jetix Europe Toons Bond with iTunes

If you thought Marvel was having a good summer, wait till the company's animated shows hit **iTunes** in a big way. **Jetix Europe** recently announced that selections from its catalog of classic kids programming are now available for download and purchase in the U.K.

iTunes Store (www.apple.com/uk/itunes). Initial offerings include *Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk* and *Sonic X*, while *Spider-Man* and *The Fantastic Four* will be added over the coming months. Also currently available on iTunes are animated offerings from leading producers, distributors and broadcast networks including Disney, Aardman Animations, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, FUNimation and Starz. ■



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Image from "The Gloaming" by Andy Huang

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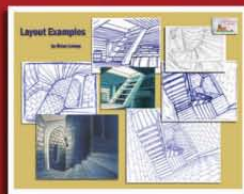
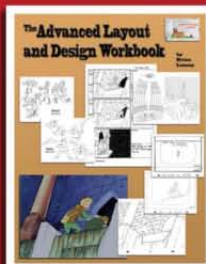


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Oscar Knows What You Did Last Summer!

The Academy funds summer internships for three vfx students. *by Ellen Wolff*

The Science and Technology Council of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is known for its annual Sci Tech Awards, which honors technologies from digital software to lenses to lights. Now the Council has committed to funding summer internships for promising students with technological skills, paying each of them \$4,000 stipends for eight-week stints at Pixar, Sony Imageworks and Rhythm & Hues.

The program got its first test in 2007, and was so well received by schools and studios that it was funded again this year and the Council hopes to expand it going forward. "The goal is to reach into areas of academia where people are doing serious research," says Barry Weiss, the internship program chair. "Part of this is to market the career paths in technological areas of motion pictures. For the next John Lasseter, there are numerous internship programs in story and animation. But for the future Ed Catmulls or Ray Feeneys, there aren't such obvious paths. That's the void we thought the Council could fill."

Ray Feeney of RFX, who co-chairs the Academy's Science and Technology Council, observes, "It's easier for students to get appraisals from professors as to whether their artistic talents stand a chance or not. There's no equivalent measurement for technical people. One of the things that prompted this program is that most studio intern programs select people by their reels. We wanted to try to influence some of the companies to add an internship based on technical credentials."

The three studios that are currently participating in the program have

Academy members on the Council, explains Weiss. "And all three have long-established internship programs of their own, so that gave us a basis to learn from them how to run a great internship program. We wanted to ensure that our interns have a premier experience."

Weiss, whose "day job" is senior VP of animation production and artist development for Sony Imageworks, says that student candidates go through a fairly rigorous selection process. "We had a list of approximately 20-25 schools, and each was invited to submit up to three students for consideration. So the first level of judging was by the faculty of a student's home institution. One of the rules of this program is that these have to be continuing students—either undergraduate or graduate—because we want them to take their experiences back into the classroom."

Weiss explains, "We had 40 or 50 applications and convened a judging panel consisting of members of the Science and Technology council, so some pretty well-informed eyes looked at the applications. They narrowed the list down to nine applicants, and we bundled those into groups of three and sent them to the host studios. Each convened their own internal judging panel and chose the one they wanted. So these students were evaluated by three pretty rigorous panels before I called them up to offer them an internship." Those chosen were Tony Fan from New York University, who went to Rhythm & Hues; Tiffany Houghton from Otis College of Art and Design, who went to Pixar; and Liron Topaz from Ringling College of Art and Design, who went to Sony Imageworks. All three were treated like Academy

members during their internships and were invited to attend Academy screenings and luncheons.

The experience of intern Tony Fan at Rhythm & Hues illustrates how the program works. R&H technology project coordinator Ben Hardy, who oversees software interns, says, "We wanted to give Tony a specific job, to make it worth-

while for him as well as us. First he went through the same two-weeks' training that our lighters go through, which teaches them our tools and how shots go through our system. Then he began working on our file system caching, and since cache testing is done with renders, his lighting training was important." Hardy calls the experience "Symbiotic. Tony has helped us save a lot of time, and the work he did is going to have a real effect on our productions."

Hardy thinks the Academy's approach has been beneficial in helping bring new technical talent to the attention of studios. "Students can't show us a reel full of code," he observes. "It would be nice if we could expand this program because we've had such a good experience."

Feeney shares that wish, noting, "We've had more companies volunteer to do this than the program can support. Hopefully next year we can increase the number of interns." But the program has already begun to produce dividends for both the interns and the studios. As Weiss remarks, "Ironically, Sony hired the person who interned at Pixar last year and Pixar hired the one who interned at Sony!" ■

Ellen Wolff is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in animation, visual effects and education.



Ray Feeney



Barry Weiss



Liron Topaz 'Emostrip'

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Project Twenty1 Festival	Oct. 4 to 5	Philadelphia, PA	www.projecttwenty1.com
International Film Festival Gent	Oct. 7 to 18	Gent, Belgium	www.filmfestival.be
Tokyo Game Show	Oct. 9 to 12	Tokyo, Japan	http://tgs.cesa.or.jp/english
San Diego Asian Film Festival	Oct. 9 to 16	San Diego, CA	www.sdaff.org
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Broadcast India Exhibition & Symposium	Oct. 15 to 19	Mumbai, India	www.saicom.com/broadcastindia
Franchising & Licensing Asia	Oct. 16 to 18	Singapore	www.franchiselicenceasia.com
Annual Austin Film Festival	Oct. 16 to 23	Austin, TX	www.austinfilmfestival.com
Chicago Int'l Children's Film Festival	Oct. 23 to Nov. 2	Chicago, IL	www.cicff.org
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When the hipster team at **Chorion Silver Lining** isn't working on wonderful animated series such as *The Mr. Men Show*, *Olivia* and *Noddy*, they like to frolic around their offices (located on East 42nd St. in New York City) and pose for not-so-candid photographs. Our heart skipped a beat when they sent us their latest snapshots—we're now waiting for the x-rated ones.



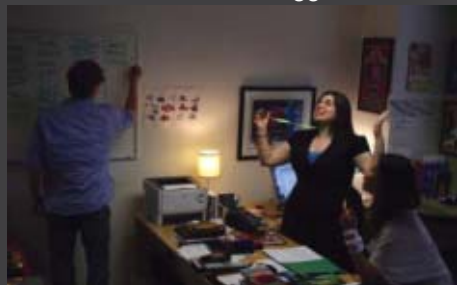
9:00 a.m. Mmm ... nothing says morning pick-me-up like a decaf triple venti nonfat 3 splenda extra hot stirred no foam caramel macchiato with whipped cream and extra caramel.



9:15 a.m. Q: What does a Brand Manager eat for breakfast? A: "Raisin Brand"... get it?



10:00 a.m. Anietra's motto: "The bigger the arm movement, the bigger the idea!"



11:00 a.m. Sarah invoking the animation muse ... his name his Hank and he lives out of a car.



11:15 a.m. ... and it's not even lunchtime yet!



11:30 a.m. Jennifer battling the infamous storage closet.



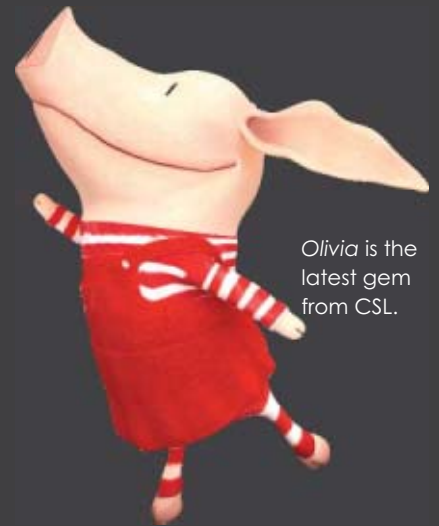
12:00 p.m. Noddy can't go five minutes without checking his BlackBerry.



Mr. Men star
Mr. Bounce



3:25 p.m. Headband Dance Party (make it stop!)



Olivia is the latest gem from CSL.



4:00 p.m. Olivia watches on as Amory and Jan work through her very best press stills (all 684 of them).



4:15 p.m. Creative Services meetings—we laughed, we cried...



5:23 p.m. Who doesn't love random acts of community theater (especially from accounting)?



5:45 p.m. Adlin *hearts* Mr. Men products. (Hey, make room for us!)

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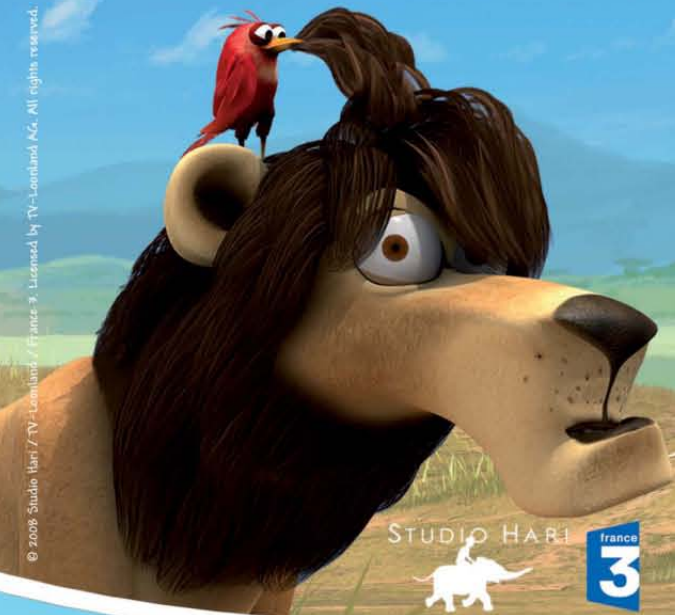
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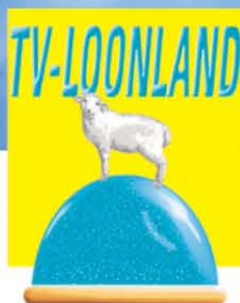
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